

The Albatross Inheritance: Local Studies Libraries

Mike Petty
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Abstract

Once upon a time the Chief Librarian was proud of his local collection, now it is regarded as an "Albatross Inheritance" not relevant to the computer age. This monograph examines the role of one local collection today, and the difficulties of management organisation, promotion and expansion in the face of massively increased public interest and professional indifference.

About the Author

Mike Petty is local studies librarian of the Cambridgeshire Collection, Central Library, Cambridge. A founder member of the Library Association Local Studies Group, he is a writer, broadcaster and lecturer on local studies, librarianship and local history. Outside librarianship, he is actively involved in his home village on the edge of the Fens, serving as Parish Councillor, charity trustee, school governor and relief shopkeeper.

EDITOR
Janet Shuter

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1. Introduction

Victorian librarians saw the public library as a place where citizens could find material relating to their contemporary community — its health, finance, welfare and educational organisations; it would also be a depository for items relating to its past. By 1901 the Cambridge Free Library had taken so much care in this regard that “the historian of the future will find here all that he will need and that is as it should be”. But priorities changed within the library service. Within 50 years 60 per cent of that material had been dispersed and the remainder moved out of public view where it lay largely unused and unremembered. It had no place in the post-war priorities of the public library service which had turned instead to “current information”, lists of societies, tourist information and the development of a general reference service concentrating on areas of comprehensiveness such as bus and train timetables from across the country. Today, community information and computer databases are the current information priorities, and although the unique, comprehensive local collection has been revived, invigorated and republicised, it remains an oddity, non-conforming to the pre-ordained management structure, an “albatross inheritance”.

Those who revived the albatross are equally shunned; the system would function far more smoothly without these awkward people who insist on non-centralised cataloguing and seek non-standard stationery. Local studies librarians need to be independent, single- if not narrow-minded and prepared to battle not only with their own colleagues but within their profession as well. For whilst much of the training now given in library schools revolves around the skills of the archivist or palaeographer, the fundamental librarianship difficulties of maintaining, collecting, organising and exploiting a unique collection are often overlooked.

The local studies librarian's problems are many:

- he must continue to collect a multitude of different types of material — books, pamphlets, periodicals and articles; newspapers; maps, illustrations, handbills, ephemera, sale particulars, tape recordings, each of which present specialist problems;
- he must devise and administer a system of catalogues and indexes in order to exploit the information contained within each item in each category;
- he must assist a wide range of enquirers, from primary school child to businessman, researcher to housewife, studying everything from birdlife to planning, archaeology to computer-related industries;
- he must cater for an ever-increasing usage yet still conserve his stock for generations to follow;
- he must manage his staff resources to best advantage, deciding priorities and adapting them to meet the individual's skills and shortfalls; must supplement them with volunteer assistance organised to obtain the maximum benefit with the minimum of supervision;

- he must publicise his service outside the library through talks, newspaper articles and local radio in order to acquire material which would otherwise be discarded and seek support from the community at large;
- he must establish a working relationship with other bodies and individuals with similar interests — record offices, museums;
- and he must attempt to establish some career prospects so that the developing staff working with him can have some hope of advancement in what is currently a dead-end aspect of librarianship.

2. The Local Studies Library: The Users' Perspective

Cambridge's first librarian, John Pink, wrote in 1882: "In the Free Library may be seen sitting side by side the MA and the Mechanic, the Undergraduate and the schoolboy; men in broad cloth and boys in fustian have a claim on equal terms to participate in the store of knowledge provided for them under the Public Libraries Act"[1]. This statement can be applied to the local studies department today.

We happen to be based in a county town with a population of over 100,000, which includes schools, further education units, adult centres, teacher training colleges and a university. It is the base for a local radio station and a newspaper chain; it is a major publishing centre and has a wide range of industry and commerce. The local studies collection provides a service to all, whatever their status; whatever the enquiry, at whatever level, we are there to provide assistance appropriate to their need or pass them on to another source.

The School Project

Often the users will be complete novices with an interest but no knowledge of how to proceed. One of the easiest categories of people to frighten away is the child with his school project: when in the middle of a hectic afternoon the next enquirer is an eight-year-old with a project on Roman Cambridge it takes conscious effort to turn away from the catalogues which will identify detailed reports on excavations conducted a century ago and to take the time, ignoring the queues and ringing telephones, to show him that most overlooked item, the general history, to turn to the right pages and find him a seat at a very big table alongside people many years his senior and somehow make him feel at home and welcome — for this will have been a great adventure. Yet all the while the very book discovered with such care could have been found alongside others in the junior library where staff to whom his age and needs are second nature could have provided the same service without the danger that our frayed nerves or too much pressure would have discouraged the youngster from ever using the library again. But without close liaison between the local studies department and the junior library they (i.e. the junior library staff) will be unaware of suitable titles and often the only source will be a magazine or newspaper article. So although the junior library does have a small selection of books, children with projects still come to the local studies department and we help as best we can. Generally we are unaware of many failures but have come to recognise the successes as they return week after week for another photocopy of a map or picture to add to their collection. Yet we know that sometimes we could have done better and that if the numbers continue to increase we shall become progressively less satisfied with our service to these most important young people.

Soon the "want to know" of the school project becomes the "need to know" of the examination system as more and more schools adopt courses which incorporate a local study as part of their exam work. Often one has the less academically-gifted

child embarking on a study which needs the resources of the local collection. For the first time they are having to use the public library and discover catalogues — for catalogue cabinets have disappeared from children's libraries. They need sources such as newspaper cuttings, census figures and illustrations and they have to make their own selection, for the time that is made to assist the very young is just not there for the more numerous examination candidates. Sometimes the topics they have been set are difficult to sustain, especially when they have already been well researched and there is little else to direct them to but one book. This is the situation when lack of interest and a topic which has gone stale can add to the general problems of adolescence to produce rowdiness and misbehaviour which has to be checked for the benefit of other users. However, the majority of young users are engrossed in their project and skinheads and bald heads study side by side.

At the apex of the school examination system is the A-level where there is often the option of a local project in both the history and geography examinations. The choice of topic becomes very important and is often made in consultation with the local studies librarian: it needs to be one in which the candidate is interested, that will not fade out nor be too comprehensively covered already so that the student can use a wide range of materials in the library and elsewhere, such as in county record office, museums or in private hands. If a suitable theme becomes apparent then the student must investigate further and discuss the idea with his teacher before submitting his proposals to the Examination Board. The process becomes more complicated as years progress since projects may not be repeated within a certain timespan and as more and more people take up the option so the librarian's knowledge of the potential of his stock becomes increasingly important. When the proposals are adopted the candidate becomes a familiar figure in the department and the discussion of problems goes ahead as it does with any reader. However, certain projects require specialist information — such as the formula on which the Poor Law rates were calculated, collected and spent — which have never been studied in relation to the Cambridgeshire area and are beyond the personal knowledge of the local studies staff. It is in these instances that the value of a major reference library in the same building becomes most apparent whilst the existence of numerous general books in the main lending library can also be exploited as the various departments of the library combine to serve the reader.

The A-level student, when working on a topic suggested by ourselves, will use more of the department's resources than perhaps any other category of user and the final result may be worthy of addition to stock. If so, care must be taken when cataloguing to emphasise that it is "only" a school project and may contain mistakes and misinterpretations due to relative inexperience. The fact that we have filled a gap in the literature also means that we may have eliminated another potential subject for investigation.

Whilst the Schools Library Service may be able to supply packs on general topics which could be personalised by the addition of local material were there staff available to make the selection, they cannot assist individual pupils with individual local projects and will refer teachers planning such an exercise directly to the local collection. Although both the school staff and the schools librarians can acquaint pupils with the basic library skills necessary to use catalogues and select material neither has the specialist knowledge of local collection organisation that will allow them to teach others.

When schools are initiating projects with classes of perhaps 30 children one is faced with the option of repeating instructions to each individual or speaking to the class *en masse*. The latter option can be done either in the library or by a visit to the classroom and the choice depends on the level of the project. For schoolchildren up to, perhaps, CSE the object is probably to use the child's interest in the local area as a starting point, to encourage that interest and use it as a means of introducing the library service as a whole. This is best done by the class visiting the department. The initiative for such a visit will usually come from the teacher who is prepared to arrange to meet all the expense and effort that such an operation involves. We will rearrange our timetables where possible to meet his needs and hope that the day will be relatively quiet. On arrival the group is shown into a "teaching area" which has been established in our stack where material previously chosen by the teacher will have been placed. On their first visit the class will be given a tour of the department when they are shown material currently on display, encouraged to browse through the books on the open shelves, shown maps, cuttings and illustrations relevant to their topics and encouraged to use the catalogues and indexes for themselves. They will be taken into the stack, shown the newspaper volumes and will, perhaps, discover their own names in the "births" column of the paper issued on the day they were born. It will be designed so that there is never time adequately to study anything but they will have enjoyed an interesting visit and often do return to take the trouble to use the catalogues to which they were so tantalisingly introduced.

Older students needing to use the collection for individual projects need a different approach. Here a visit to the class with a slide presentation is more appropriate since one can introduce the types of stock and dwell on the catalogues and the forms that have to be completed so that items can be speedily retrieved. One can stress the studious nature of the department but emphasise that they may use the whole range of facilities and are not disbarred just because they are still at school. Afterwards there is the opportunity to discuss individual projects or suggest possible topics which they can discuss with their teacher before visiting the collection. It may still be a frightening place for them but they will feel they are welcome and know something of the resources.

In a department where staff are already under constant pressure from enquirers one might ask whether it is right to undertake talks to schools or allow class visits. We feel that a library is for use and that if people have need of our resources they should not be denied. Schools cannot be prevented from featuring local studies as part of their curriculum and it is better if people who will use us anyway know how to make the most of the facilities. However, changes proposed in the education syllabuses may result in projects becoming compulsory in history, geography and economics studies. This is a situation which would completely overwhelm current local studies provision in the libraries.

Teachers

Co-operation with teachers of history and geography through their specialist groups provided the means of access to the Education Department's Inspector of Humanities and In-Service Training. He took the initiative of negotiating a number of secondments whereby experienced teachers were attached to the collection for a term to examine the potential and the problems involving various groups of schoolchildren. Three such projects have been undertaken, studying primary school needs, the situation relating to A-level candidates and the needs of secondary schools. The reports all

indicate the importance of the local studies collection, one concluding:

If this unique teaching resource is to provide the service now being demanded from it by secondary schools more staff must be provided, both teachers and librarians. There is a grave danger that lack of proper . . . support will see this valuable collection becoming increasingly overwhelmed by demand . . . whoever allows this to happen will incur the wrath of present and future generations of Cambridgeshire people who care and want to know about their heritage[2].

When this matter was raised with the Information Team the response was that it was a problem for the local studies librarian and that if he could not cope he should say so. One can only take this as conferring the authority to withdraw the facilities of the County Library local collection from the County Education Department's schools. However, changes in the syllabus would affect all local collections in the county and hopefully the situation will be reassessed in due course.

One solution might be to utilise teaching staff who have either been made redundant due to school closure or who are recovering from the strain of the classroom and need a period of readjustment before returning.

Such teachers will understand the needs and problems experienced by schoolchildren. Much emphasis has been placed on those with history projects but many more are studying aspects of geography which are more difficult to service and which introduce theories and techniques library staff may find difficult to understand. Nor do we often appreciate the different needs of various age ranges. For example, our approach to one pupil requesting pictures of buses was to show him the illustrations catalogue listing hundreds of items whereas the teacher merely handed him a book containing a dozen which was sufficient for his needs. Sometimes the teacher wants the pupil to come up against a brick wall so that he learns the frustration of research which comes to nothing and develops skills of adopting a different approach; the helpful local studies librarian, however, may see the problem and divert the pupil away from it too soon.

Whilst offering such assistance the teacher will learn the resources of the local collection and will appreciate the "impossible" projects being set by some of his colleagues with whom he can remonstrate on an equal footing. In the quiet periods between visitors he can select items to construct teaching packs suitable for use in class thus benefiting numerous schools. The local collection benefits from the additional presence of such a person who is not only an extra body when staff are short, so that we have more time to concentrate on other enquirers and the inevitable accessioning routines, but has an approach from which we can learn something new. Should such an attachment become permanent it must have implications for regrading since even a teacher on half-pay due to illness will probably earn more than the librarians alongside him.

Future teachers attending training colleges in Cambridge are brought into the collection as part of their studies and shown the facilities and services offered, the potential of the illustrations and directories. They are also told that wherever they teach they will be within the area of a library local collection which will offer at least some of the material — although they might have to search to find it.

Students and Researchers

Students in higher education present an interesting group of enquirers since they are neither simply gathering facts as in O-level, nor just concerned with interpretation

of information as at A-level, but are combining elements of both. They are not merely concerned with demonstrating their palaeographic skills in deciphering documents but are using them to extract information which they supplement with what they find in books and on the ground. They are undertaking research which their tutors may not have the personal expertise to supplement or assess.

Thus one dissertation on social development in a Cambridgeshire village was largely based on census figures and made the assertion that since there was no evidence for coprolite mining in the parish those registered as so employed must have travelled to neighbouring villages to find work; yet one can point to such a site and elderly residents will confirm its use. The student also completed his study with no mention whatever of the fires, some accidental and some deliberate, which must have had considerable social impact since virtually half the village was destroyed.

On another occasion a student who analysed the use of the River Cam in relation to its historical development completely overlooked national returns showing quantities of goods carried which were clearly signalled in one of the basic texts and although not housed in the local collection, where he largely carried out his survey, were available in the University Library.

I cannot report on the outcome of the first project but was unexpectedly involved in the second since the difficulties of finding assessors were such that the University was forced to call upon the local studies librarian to act as external examiner. I was therefore privileged to see a copy of the assessment made by the internal examiner which made my own analysis seen particularly inept, yet the errors of fact, the omissions and the inadequacies of the bibliography to which I could point were amongst the sections which were rewritten before the dissertation was accepted.

The local studies librarian is not a historian, geographer or sociologist yet the department he organises has the potential to supply at least some of their needs. Thus within Cambridge there are many excellent and important libraries yet none of these offer the same range of resources and indexes to the undergraduate or postgraduate, lecturer or don who is pursuing an element of local study and may need such obscure information as details of plant life which formerly lined river edges. Fortunately the History Tripos does not, as yet, feature local history but students from the Department of Land Economy or School of Architecture mingle with Cambridge residents who are studying at universities in Leicester or Glasgow, whilst students at adult evening classes share tables with midwives studying the area as part of their vocational training course.

With many enquirers speed is at a premium. The researcher from the Victoria County History will have a very few weeks at his disposal for any one village and will have a standard list of sources to be checked, some nationally, some at the Record Office and some in the local collection. One source they do not usually have the time to exploit is the local newspaper but the numerous footnotes in recent volumes have proved the value of both newspaper cuttings files and our news index cards. They also use the obscure pamphlets printed on poor paper thus ensuring that the relevant information they contain is recorded in a source which will survive for future generations.

The Wider Community

Another group needing information quickly is that of newspaper reporters compiling feature articles or looking for background information to a current news story. Feature

articles have the capacity to give quite detailed presentation of topics which would not warrant other coverage and in this way to inspire ordinary men and women who have a deep interest in their locality but profess no academic learning to explore the resources of the local collection. These are the sort of people that the old County Library served with their books by post and who will seldom venture into a central library with its imposing furniture and studious atmosphere. Should they do so they would not expect assistance nor to be made to feel welcome since they are not historians or anybody important. But they are a category to whom we give our service as fully as they will let us and are amongst our most welcome visitors.

In fact, for many people local history is a hobby, a mental diversion from their everyday life. They will browse in bookshops or jumble sales rather than library catalogues, for the answer they seek is less important than the fun of finding it. Very few will have attended lessons or courses, nor are they members of any local history society — such groups collectively amount to perhaps 10 per cent of our users. In 1982 the County Record Office reported 3,000 people signing their departmental register whilst the local collection recorded 10,000 individual enquiries and many more people wandered in, helped themselves from the open shelf stock and left without adding to the statistics.

The Librarian of the Cambridgeshire Collection . . . his deputy, Chris Jakes, and the two girls who work in the collection . . . offer local history researchers five-star library service. No matter how small or abstruse your query, no matter how little time you have . . . they will do their best to help you with your detective work and at the same time illuminate whole areas of local life. They will also make you feel as if you are the most special person who has ever used the library[3].

That may be the opinion of a regular user but the staff are less satisfied that we have always brought the full potential of the material in our charge to the assistance of each reader.

Enquiries can be of three types: those which are sufficiently broad to be answered by using the catalogues and indexes, those for which we have the answer but can only find it through consulting a wide range of sources with the staff using experience and intuition to make the necessary links between areas of stock, and those for which we cannot be of any assistance. Most enquiries combine elements of all three and very few people do use even half of our resources.

One of the more common requests is for material on places, either rural or urban, and so the catalogues have been constructed to allow readers interested in their village to locate material merely by looking under that place in the different sequences. Thus the book catalogue will include entries for histories of the settlement itself and its constituent parts such as chapel or school, there will be planning reports, local magazines, articles and other material and the reader can be supposed to be able to make his own selection. However, experience shows that many will overlook the major item simply because they have not checked right through the cards to find the entry for the section in the *Victoria County History*. Others may overlook the pottered history which is more in keeping with their needs.

Even if they do consult all the cards they will find no reference in the catalogue to the books which are important for every village — county directories, agricultural reports, geologies or census figures, so these are indicated on a separate leaflet which each village historian is given — geographers have a different guide.

The guides refer to the other sections of stock and the book catalogue reinforces this by containing references to the various cuttings files which are relevant to the

particular topic. Thus the village cuttings will reflect change in the community over a period of 20 years and include feature articles which themselves summarise the history or background to an issue. In the opinion of one of the teachers who analysed the resources of the department these cuttings files alone are sufficient for children undertaking a CSE project. The news index will record the stories contained in the news columns of the *Cambridge Chronicle* between 1770 and 1899, a period which influenced the development of the contemporary community when incendiarism razed many old houses, schools and chapels were established and the parish church often drastically restored. It will list turnpike activity and the coming of the railways, the development of postal services and parish reading rooms and public halls. Very few users will sample even a small percentage of the fascinating information to which this index refers yet these cards reflect the contents of only one part of one title — there are numerous other papers — and much more information contained in advertisements and court cases which has yet to be indexed.

Most users consult our illustrations catalogue, some also check that of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's photographic record housed alongside. Few, however, follow the guidance to indexes of unprinted negatives or files of original transparencies.

The index to Ordnance Survey maps shows which sheets we have for individual villages, the Cambridgeshire plans sequence records earlier surveys which have been reproduced in books but few will turn to other maps such as land use and geological sheets. Nor do many use sales catalogues or tape recordings, yet all are clearly listed on the guides they are given. For the staff, however, such projects are relatively simple since the reader can be left to make his own selection from the items catalogued.

The students of aspects of urban life are much less easily catered for. Where a suburb or district has an accepted name this can be used in the catalogues and area studies, and ward newsletters and whole-city histories which have especial relevance can be listed. Other guidance is contained on base maps which we use to record other aspects of stock, underlining streets for which we have newspaper cuttings files, sales catalogues or deeds and illustrations. The street cuttings may contain feature articles charting growth and give further ideas, perhaps identifying tradesmen who have been responsible for serving the community and might themselves have been the subject of articles listed in the local biography file. The sales particulars may include old catalogues or plans and will show the type of dwellings the street contains, sometimes dating individual property and including an illustration. The illustrations catalogue will record pictures either in the form of original photographs or contained in the bound volumes of newspapers which might show the construction of the street 60 years ago.

At each stage the reader has more checking and filling in of forms than has the village historian. He then has to consider other important sources not so far identified — street directories which can chart the building of individual houses and also list the occupation of residents allowing an assessment of the status of the area at different times. Maps, although often not detailed enough to show housing development, might show buildings such as churches, chapels, schools and factories which can themselves be checked through the book catalogue and news index.

Neither village nor urban historian will use all our resources, nor will our material give him all he needs. They will both probably require enclosure maps and other material from the County Record Office and need to make surveys in the area itself where they might well discover a published history, which we have missed, being sold in local shops.

Topical Research

Many people explore topics rather than place and are more dependent on the skills of the librarian, for without subject cataloguing they are impossible yet with his anticipation they can be straightforward.

Thus the person examining banking will consult the classified book catalogue and discover that there is little published material: the Barclay's Bank group history has a chapter on Cambridge and there is a *cause célèbre* involving a disputed inheritance, whilst the Westminster Bank produced a detailed brochure about their Cambridge branch in 1967. There is also a section in the *Victoria County History* which may be supposed to be authoritative yet the book catalogue has entries for cheques and receipts issued by banks not mentioned at all in the *VCH*. The news index records the establishment and failure of several other banks during the period 1770 to 1820 and these have been transcribed by volunteer helpers; the handbills catalogue has an item about a run on a bank. Whilst the newspaper cuttings files will chart the opening of new branches and the establishment of new banks over the last 20 years, the illustrations catalogue will depict other buildings which have fulfilled that role.

All this is a start but would probably not be sufficient for a detailed project; one could diversify by exploring the controversy which led to a banker's son being transported to Australia but this has been so well researched that there is little scope for developing the story. It does suggest a new line of development by investigating the background of those people who were involved in founding the early banks which have now passed into history virtually without trace. Presumably there is some central record of such companies and this is worth pursuing through the reference library or the lending department where other studies of the history of banking will give a line of approach.

Even straightforward types of enquiry being pursued by well-prepared students will need staff assistance in retrieving material selected and guidance or advice which may be beyond the experience of junior staff. Other enquiries can only be answered by checking a variety of sources with staff working side by side with the reader and recognising what information is significant and can be developed, using experience and intuition together with extensive knowledge of the stock to seek out the information required. Thus an enquiry about the date piped water was first supplied to a village will, in all probability, not be found in the village history but answered through county council surveys of facilities, health reports and financial accounts. Yet the reader will be given the village history to start on whilst the staff follow other leads.

This basic philosophy — to give the reader something to be checking (even when one knows the information is not there) — also applies when there is nothing we can do to answer the request made. One cannot, for example, supply the date for an individual house in most villages — our maps are just not detailed enough, histories do not mention specific buildings — and the reader must go either to the lending library for a book on how to date through construction features or to the County Record Office for more detailed maps. However, as he has come into the local collection we can show him our earliest Ordnance Survey map for it might show out-buildings or wells which have since disappeared and direct him to the illustrations catalogues since we might have a picture of the property or area as it was in the relatively immediate past.

It can be argued that a local studies collection should contain material advising readers how to conduct a local study — how to trace a family tree, date a house or write up

research. Similarly, perhaps staff should attend lectures or be expert in geology, soil science, urban studies, sociology or any other of the hundreds of specialist topics we are called upon to assist. The former would involve an extension on the building to hold all the literature, the second necessitate a ten-day working week.

Letter Enquiries

In addition to personal visits and telephone calls letters are received from people who have embarked on the study of an area far removed from their own and who have come across specific points they wish to have checked. Such letters can take time to reply to that is not easily found. Then there will be others which have been duplicated and sent out to various councils and departments in the hope that somebody will do all the research for them. In such cases the only reply can be one of profound regret that we do not have the time to assist but enclose a guide to our catalogues and indexes so that when the writer visits the county "which must of course be an essential part of the study he is undertaking" then he will be better able to discover the information with our help.

Quite often the correspondents offer to pay research charges. Many archivists and some librarians encounter this problem and reply stating that they cannot assist but enclose the names of researchers who will undertake the work for a fee. Some depositories do make a charge, sometimes without informing the writer who receives a polite letter stating that nothing was found but enclosing an invoice. In our case we treat each letter on its merit and answer those we justifiably can, without charge.

What are typical enquiries?. During 1980 I maintained a log of some requests in the jumbled order that they were received: the origin of a street name, details of empty houses in an area of Cambridge, a picture of New Chesterton Institute, early aviation, a Canadian family tracing their ancestors, information on proposals to use a quarry as a rifle range, proposed developments in a village to which the enquirer was considering moving, the date of a photograph of a village, a businessman tracing the history of his company in conjunction with a forthcoming centenary celebration, another seeking an illustration for a menu at an international conference, a designer seeking inspiration from Victorian playbills to produce a modern poster for a production of *Maria Marten and the Murder in the Red Barn*, an artist wishing to copy old photographs for sale in aid of local charities, volunteers wishing to assist in transcribing items from newspapers, information on clockmakers, background detail for a novel to be set in the fens of the early 1800s, pictures of traction engines that a teacher could use in her class, suitable projects for the Duke of Edinburgh's award, information on "Rational" cars made in a local village 80 years ago, details about a windmill for a brochure, illustrations for the walls of a redesigned public house, display advertisements for university gownmakers, a Yugoslavian television crew needing pictures for a film about life in a university city, a college seeking an engraving to use in their conference brochure, information on Hauxton Home Guard, the visit of Madame Tussaud's waxworks in 1832, pictures of Victorian letter boxes, visits from library trainees, the producer of a forthcoming television series "History on your doorstep", information on a ghost haunting a house . . . The above gives an idea of about 30 of the enquiries received during 1980. Often we receive twice this number in a single day and a survey during a quiet month revealed one enquiry, on average, every eight minutes with each taking 4.9 minutes to satisfy.

It takes a considerable strain to maintain this level of service to numerous enquirers and then immediately return to the essential routine of accessioning and cataloguing (which itself needs concentration) until the next enquiry. Assistants need to be trained, enthusiastic and dedicated; they also need to be appreciated and are sustained by the knowledge that every month for the last decade at least one book has been published which acknowledges the help supplied by the Cambridgeshire Collection staff.

Library Service Departments

The local collection will also offer services to other departments of the library service each of which can benefit from the knowledge of new publications added to the collection and the circulation librarian will take items from the "New Books" shelves to each book selection meeting. Unwanted reserve stock books will be transferred to the collection's duplicate loan stock which itself will form a first source for material requested on the inter-lending scheme. Needless bibliographical checking can be avoided if requests staff come directly to the collection for local titles or subject requests. The Schools Library service can save much time and money by using local pictures to illustrate general topics such as stagecoaches or windmills whilst specialist talks which the local studies librarian will compile on subjects such as the world wars or fenland floods could easily form the basis for a tape/slide presentation both for schools and for reminiscence therapy groups in hospitals and old folks' homes which are part of the responsibility of the Services for the Disadvantaged librarian. The organiser of talking books for the blind can benefit both from the department's stock and from scripts already prepared for local radio.

Branch libraries experience considerable demand for material on their own locality and the information librarian will deposit a basic set of local material alongside the directories and almanacs which are an essential part of their reference stock; the development of such an outlier collection, incorporating items from the duplicate/loan stock, copies of relevant illustrations or maps and microfiche of the news cuttings adds a new dimension to the facilities offered which will be appreciated both by general readers and children with village projects.

3. Development of the Cambridgeshire Collection

At the Cambridge Free Library so much care has been taken . . . that the Cambridge historian will find collected here all the material he will need. This is as it should be[4].

In Cambridge the local authorities . . . have . . . paid careful attention to building up the Cambridgeshire Collection at the Central Library . . . valuable sources of material on the history of the area[5].

The first quotation above, from an editorial in the *Cambridge Graphic* of 1901 was a comment on the Library Association conference in Plymouth when the Librarian of Perth had put in a plea "for the utility of the Free Library as a repository of local history" and reflects the achievements of Cambridge's first Librarian, John Pink, in having established in the years since 1855 a local collection of tremendous potential. The second, from S.A. Manning's *Portrait of Cambridgeshire*, indicates that this aspect of the library service continues to receive similar priority; sadly it only goes to prove that one must not believe everything one reads in books. In 1949 over half the books collected by Pink were dispersed and whilst Manning was writing a similar decimation of stock was being resisted. Far from being an asset to be cherished, the local collection has long been regarded as an albatross around the necks of the library service — it would not go away but life would have been much easier without it.

The Cambridgeshire Collection was established through the enthusiasm of the Chief Librarian for 50 years, John Pink, who, with his library committee, strove to make it "the depository of all documents having a local interest so that the public may have easy access to them at all times"[6] with the emphasis being placed on contemporary material. By 1905 he could claim that "anything and everything has been collected that illustrates the history and customs of the county, university and town of Cambridge"[7] and others confirmed that this was "mainly due to his efficiency and zeal"[8].

Pink's successor continued to acquire material and planned expansion of the library's area was partly justified by the need to make the local material more accessible: "The cultivation of interest in local history . . . shows every prospect of the future reference room being used to fullest advantage"[9]. Lectures on local topics filled the library and an exhibition of maps, prints and drawings held in 1925 attracted large attendances, including parties of schoolchildren, whose frequent comments of appreciation left no doubts on the minds of the Library Committee as to its success.

This, however, was the zenith of local collection development since when the annual reports turn instead to other considerations: "The Central Library is severely taxed to house the great quantity of books . . . congestion is becoming serious . . . the Lending Department is the most popular section and it should be given a better position . . ."[10]. When additional space became available changes took place and the Cambridgeshire Collection moved into "the worst ventilated room" with least natural light in the building as reading room and lending library changed places.

Post-war revival of reference services incorporated the introduction of an information bureau and a quick reference section. It was not clear what sort of a reference service could usefully be provided in a university city with so many specialist libraries and departments; stock was built up as required, relying on a detailed record of books which had been requested and a register of unsatisfied enquiries. There was a serious attempt at completeness in certain specified fields, for example, sets of town guides and omnibus time tables, but no mention whatever of the local collection[11].

In fact, this was one of the most significant periods for the local collection since the Committee accepted a proposal for a reduction in its terms of reference which excluded material relating to the University and colleges, and reduced the collection to approximately 40 per cent of its existing size. This would give space for future acquisitions and allow concentration on building up items which remained within the new terms of reference[12]. Within months additional material was being sought and the newly-created space filled by a donation of newspaper volumes.

As the reference department continued to expand more open-shelf space was required; one consequence was that in 1954 the local collection left its locked cases and moved into a small closed room completely out of public view. When in 1956 the university items which had been deleted from stock seven years earlier were finally sold off, many felt the entire heritage built up by Pink and other librarians for over 100 years had been destroyed, whereas, in fact, it was lying largely unsorted and unused in two small back rooms. In 1964 a proposed plan of a projected new Central Library[13] showed no provision at all for local studies: yet just a decade later the collection moved into two large rooms, fully catalogued and organised.

Reviving the Collection

There are two means of reviving local collections in a small urban library system. One involves discussion at senior level and the formulation of priorities which can be weighed by a committee, advised by a librarian who in all probability has no personal experience of local studies librarianship or any other aspect of information work. Success is unlikely since issue statistics are definable assets when arguing for more resources and the book fund is something to be enhanced; local studies departments spend little and issue less.

The second is for somebody to take the initiative and report later, to recognise the potential and exploit it, to embark on recataloguing and expansion and ignore anything else that gets in the way. This will endear the initiator to his users but not to his colleagues and will be resented and resisted. However, it might succeed.

The snag is that since 1974 there have been no small urban library authorities. In April of that year Cambridge and Peterborough city libraries were combined with the former county libraries of Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely and Huntingdon and Peterborough to form Cambridgeshire Libraries. Amongst the services they inherited were four local collections.

Whereas Cambridge Free — latterly City — library had since 1855 amassed a reference collection of material relating to Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely, both these areas had, in the 1920s, established their own County Libraries which principally served the needs of scattered communities with books for home reading. They each also took pride in establishing a local collection and each issued catalogues of their holdings which promoted this aspect of their service at a time when the Cambridge Collection was in its moribund state. Inevitably they acquired titles which

Cambridge missed and built up multiple copies of other books which the city lending libraries did not stock — county directories, valuable books on fen drainage or cathedral architecture; and all were issued for study at home (provided some were returned by registered post).

However, such was the interest attaching to local items that almost inevitably some volumes failed to return and their absence went unnoticed by the part-time library staff until it was too late. To maintain the necessary control the Isle of Ely's local collection was administered by the Deputy County Librarian from his office in March, 30 miles north of Cambridge, and most local books were recalled from branch libraries to be housed there.

When he moved to Cambridge following the amalgamation of the two counties in 1964 he brought the local collection with him, hoping to incorporate with it the Cambridgeshire local collection.

The Cambridgeshire county collection was housed in the Shire Hall branch library and included some illustrations and a set of Ordnance Survey maps. Its bookstock had been recorded in a detailed published catalogue issued in 1961[14] but there had not been the same personal attention and many items were no longer to be located. Nevertheless, it constituted the largest open-access local collection in the county and remained so until reorganisation since it did not prove possible physically to rehouse it in the new local collection room established in the headquarters building.

Although the amalgamation of libraries as a result of local government reorganisation did not formally take place until April 1974 there were numerous discussions between the existing chief officers of the still-independent authorities in the year before. It became apparent that the new authority was not intending to accord the local studies collections much priority. Thus whilst it was still in his power to do so, Walter Dring, the acting Cambridgeshire County Librarian, decided to compile a joint catalogue of the material housed in the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely local collections. This was a tremendous final contribution to benefit local studies librarianship from one who had devoted many years to its cause, since Walter Dring not only published the most comprehensive catalogue of Cambridgeshire material but invited the new administration to provide a foreword indicating what arrangements would be made for the local researcher following reorganisation — a foreword that I was delegated to draft. *The fen and the furrow*[15] although published in the name of Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely County Library was not actually issued until after reorganisation and so became the first publication of the new authority. Although funded by the former county the income from sales accrued to the new and together with the income from Dring's best-selling *The Fenland story*[16] formed the basis for a future local history publications programme. This catalogue did not, however, cover the items in the city's Cambridgeshire Collection.

The City Collection

"Books" is an inadequate word to describe the printed material which ranged from a civil-war tract to the latest county planning report; there were extra-illustrated county histories, variant editions of volumes of Cambridge topography: virtually all the "antiquarian" volumes relating to Cambridgeshire. In addition, there was perhaps the most complete collection of Cambridge guidebooks from 1753, religious tracts, poetry

and humour. But John Pink, the first Librarian, had started the collection with the intention of taking "every scrap" and the real strengths were the election and political addresses, files of annual reports from groups such as the Society for the Suppression of Vice in Young Women, instructions from Victorian dentists on the care of the teeth and official reports on the provision of an adequate sewage system; there were contracts for lighting the town with gas, Acts of Parliament relating to enclosures, turnpike roads and marriage settlements and more. Much of it was, and remains, unique material. Volumes of scrapbooks and files of ephemera record circus visits, local politics, reward notices and "last dying words and confessions" broadsheets; not only did it contain the poster for a balloon ascent in 1811 but also the stub of the ticket that was retained after admission to the enclosure to watch the launch. Others have described it as "the premier source for non-university materials reflecting the life and history of the old county"[17] — the university material having been dispersed in 1949.

Were this the sum total of the collection it would outshine the combined resources of all other county library and museum printed material. But the "books" represented only a small proportion of the total stock. Newspaper files were complete back to 1770 and comprised the largest collection of Cambridgeshire newspapers anywhere — some 35 different titles with different political and social bias. By 1974 there were newspaper cuttings files extending back for 15 years which covered over 700 topics, maintained on a daily basis from both local and national papers.

Even older and almost as complete were the files of printed maps of both city and county dating back to 1576 — decorative county maps with splendid cartouches but inadequate details, maps showing the proposals for the drainage of the Fenland and the area before the work was undertaken; plans of the buildings on the Market Hill before the fire of 1849, a set of the massive 46 feet-to-the-mile scale plans of the Cambridge of 1886. Nor were there single copies; many of the variant editions, often distinguished only by the additional railway lines which were etched in, were also in stock.

To many the highlight of the collection was the files of engravings and other illustrations which had by 1974 been amassing for 119 years and which were unique in their range and numbers.

Were this material still in its largely neglected state — out of the public eye and interest — then management problems would have been less, but — fortunately — extensive revitalisation, cataloguing and publicity had by then been accorded it: there had been three large exhibitions in the Guildhall, each opened by the Mayor and attended by hundreds of visitors; researchers, journalists and others were beginning to glimpse the potential of the hidden collection and start to make use of it. Already there were many acknowledgements in new books, one of which recorded thanks to "the curator" "who has built up an immensely valuable collection of Cambridge material"[18]. Within the library profession interest was being shown in the collection, and several mentions were accorded it in the reissued *Local History and the Library*[19] — the inspiration for many budding local studies librarians.

Reorganisation and Rationalisation

Thus at the time of reorganisation there were three significant local collections covering the eastern half of the new county — the former "Isle" collection at Cambridge headquarters, the former "Cambridgeshire" collection at Shire Hall branch library and the former "City" collection in Cambridge central library — all within a mile of each

other. There were no resources elsewhere. On 1 April 1974 "unique" items from the two county collections were assimilated into the City's holdings and the remainder of the "Isle" books were used to establish reference collections in the three main libraries in the north of the county and supplemented stock in the lending libraries throughout the area. The "unwanted" residue was added to the Cambridgeshire Collection duplicate/loan stock. When Shire Hall branch closed as part of a rationalisation exercise some time later its local material was similarly dispersed and the largest open-access local collection lost to researchers.

This was the opportunity to establish a whole-county stock in the two other reference local collections at Huntingdon and Peterborough. The former was housed in a new library building where it occupied an area of the gallery. It comprised a collection which had been carefully built up over a number of years and had been recorded in published catalogues; there was a special collection based on the library of the former Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Archaeological Society, and the stock included newspaper volumes, maps and illustrations. This collection was the responsibility of the reference librarian who also had to administer a music library.

The Peterborough local collection was longer-established and larger, but had traditionally looked to Northamptonshire as its area and had no links with old Cambridgeshire; the material was housed in cramped conditions in an old central library which could not have accommodated the number of volumes needed to offer a comprehensive coverage.

The other possible centre for a whole-county collection was Cambridge where a new central library was being constructed with extensive provision for local studies. It already had material on half of the new area.

One of the fears attending reorganisation was that treasures built up by one area would be ransacked by another — indeed, this idea had been raised in Cambridge during an attempt to retain library powers. There was also disquiet between the new partners, with the feeling that Cambridge would become the dominant force. For these reasons it would have been difficult to transfer "unique" items although duplicate items could have been deposited and missing volumes bought in when opportunity allowed; newspapers already in stock covered the new area, Ordnance Survey maps could have been acquired on microfilm. The most important task, however, would have been to build up stock reflecting the developments within the whole of the new county so that researchers could obtain an overview instead of having to travel to different libraries for their information. A centralised collection would also have enabled cataloguing to be undertaken in one place and duplicate cards sent to the divisional depositories, allowed indexing of county magazines to be done once rather than in four different places and encouraged co-ordination of resources rather than individual initiatives.

Such concepts had no place in the management scheme which insisted on a divisional organisation with each area responsible for its own services.

Local government reorganisation in 1974 created many new authorities which echoed former county boundaries. In Cambridgeshire, however, it merged two counties which had no traditional links. It combined four library authorities each of which had different issue systems, loan periods, selection policies and much else. Four "divisions" were set up corresponding to the previous authorities and divisional management teams appointed to assess the local problems, consider the variant priorities and slowly

develop a unified structure. The management teams included circulation, schools, children's and information librarians to liaise with their counterparts in other divisions and develop their specialities in co-ordination.

The development of local studies services was the responsibility of the information team. At reorganisation existing staff needed to be incorporated into the posts created; thus an area which previously had meagre reference facilities had to find an information librarian who might have little practical experience but be in the right place at the right time; elsewhere a senior reference librarian with no particular interest or skills in management would be appointed only to find himself outnumbered in the "specialist team" by the non-specialists.

The information team's task was to co-ordinate information provision throughout the new county, liaising with Citizens Advice Bureaux and other specialist groups. There was the need to agree developments such as services to the business community and the move towards new technology which could open up online information.

Local studies collections were not accorded priority; some team members were unaware of the resources, others felt that these had had sufficient prominence in the preceding years and must now learn that there were other areas equally as important such as "coming events" lists, guides to places to visit, community information and lists of local societies.

It was clear that where developments could be made through individual initiative others could be blocked by similar processes, such as very broad hints about personal promotion being dependent on adopting a different approach more closely according with the opinions of a senior colleague. Such are the realities of local studies librarianship.

The situation was further complicated by the concept of "divisional organisation" which dictated that the new county was divided into areas of roughly the same population. Two of the divisions were almost equivalent to established boundaries and did not present particular problems, the other two proved unworkable and have been amended subsequently in the light of experience. Library administration was not alone in adopting and later abandoning such areas but it undermined the whole theory on which organisation was based.

The former county of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely comprises relatively scattered small villages in the north and relatively closely-packed larger settlements in the south. The divisional boundary, based purely on population considerations, ran within six miles of Cambridge and transferred the responsibility for villages which had traditionally looked south to a new administration based 30 miles north. For circulation, schools and children's services the difficulties were principally logistical but when applied to the information service were much more serious.

Strict application of a "self-autonomy" concept would have deprived most of the county residents of the service of the only large stock-holding reference library in the area and was clearly nonsensical, not least because reference facilities are open to all. But it did mean that Cambridge reference library ceased to record details of community information, societies or coming events for many villages near to the city, despite the fact that the new administration in the north had no staff whatever to take over such responsibility.

The implications for the local studies collections were that the Cambridgeshire Collection which had historically covered two of the newly created divisions was to be

confined to one-third of its former area, that it should cease to maintain newspaper cuttings files, parish magazines and illustrations files for many villages and, indeed, transfer existing material to Wisbech where there were neither staff to service it nor, indeed, space to house it.

The unilateral decision not to comply until the management team could first learn that such a collection actually existed and then appreciate the implications of such a policy was finally ratified after some four years[20] but once again one was failing to conform to a system that others were striving to make function.

Staff were nominated within each division to have practical responsibility for local studies work in addition to their other duties; thus the Cambridge local studies librarian did not share the problems of his colleagues in needing also to service gramophone records, a divisional library handling the whole range of services, or a reference department. It was recognised that each area was developing in isolation, meeting the same problems and finding solutions individually, nor did any know the resources of other areas, both within the library and in other depositories. However, the management structure contained no provision for meetings and considerable lobbying was necessary before they were sanctioned. Then recommendations suggested to management via the information team became so delayed and amended in the process that they emerged unworkable. In part this was well-meant misunderstanding of the specialist issues raised; in part it was felt to be deliberate obstruction.

Since the enthusiasm of the nominated staff towards the local studies element of their work varied and absence to attend such meetings often denuded their departments of staff, it took little pressure for such meetings to be deleted — especially as their suggestions were contrary to the established management policy.

With neither a meeting of specialists nor a whole-county co-ordinator there is nobody to fight for the needs of local studies departments within the libraries or to liaise with other providers of such information such as archivists or curators. However, without the restraint of needing to report or discuss one can push ahead within narrow limits, improving the service to those readers fortunate enough to live within the area.

The creation at reorganisation of the post of local studies librarian for the Cambridge division was a recognition of the importance of the collection that had been established and the expansion of responsibility that the assimilation of the two county local collections entailed. The need for two junior staff was also recognised thus formalising the *de facto* position that had been developed.

In the pre-reorganisation days the library system was small enough for management to be aware of overwork and to be able to take steps to remedy it, but in the modern large organisations this is no longer possible since staffing has to be based on County Council policy and other divisions may have no local studies staff at all.

Thus the staff establishment developed in 1973/74 was a recognition of the existing situation: three staff operated a local collection serving 4,000 readers per year from a closed-access broom cupboard at the end of the reference library. A decade later with a separate public department occupying 4,000 square feet and enquiries often exceeding 1,000 each month the staff numbers have increased to four. Despite the increased responsibility staffing grades have remained static, rating the position of local studies librarian alongside that of a sub-librarian in the lending department or

a group librarian responsible for three small branch libraries. Yet Cambridgeshire devotes more staff resources to its local collections than most other counties.

Space

In 1974, the bulk of the collection was still housed in the two small, closed rooms into which it had been moved in 1954. These were shelved from floor to high ceiling yet were so narrow that should one tip one's chair backwards from the table it would hit the wall before it fell over. It took little research to discover that the Medical Officer of Health had pronounced the rooms unhealthy in 1904. One held the majority of the bookstock, the other many bound volumes of newspapers stacked several deep high in the air — one would climb a ladder and tug the heavy volume from above one's head. More were ranged around the walls of the workroom, others filed in cupboards across the other side of the reference library. Filing cabinets at the end of the room and in the passageway housed pamphlets and illustrations. All this was unseen by any reader. The public presence was a sign saying "Cambridgeshire Collection" and a staff position in the reference library, a two-seat table which we tried to restrict to our own users, and some filing cabinets housing the newspaper cuttings.

Under such conditions it is not surprising that few people knew of the existence of the collection and that generations of local researchers had failed to appreciate its resources; those who did seek it out were often forced to search for a seat in the cramped reference library alongside people seeking relief from the cold and a place to dry their socks. Thus for many the revelation that was shortly to come was to be as traumatic as it was for the staff.

The fundamental requirement for a local studies department is space for material and for readers. A local collection will continue to grow and adequate provision must be made for such expansion; thus, when in 1975 a new Central Library was nearing completion, with provision on the third floor for a Cambridgeshire Collection room adjacent to the city archives repository, careful measurements were taken of existing shelf-space and the area occupied by newspaper volumes and the cabinets housing newspaper cuttings and illustrations, and generous expansion allowed. The space allotted (2,000 square feet) seemed massive, considering that the material had formerly been housed in little more than a broom cupboard, and the plans were agreed.

However, at the last moment the city decided not to proceed with its archive store and "Cambridgeshire Collection" was pencilled in on the plans, thus more than doubling the floor space. It was only when physically placing the stock that it was realised that the original area would have been totally inadequate.

A local studies room has to fulfil four functions: it needs to provide display and study areas, which are open to the public, a stack area which is not and staff work space.

Many people are nervous when entering a library for the first time and this is compounded in specialist departments which are away from the main public areas. A display commencing in the corridor and leading into the collection can overcome this hesitation as well as providing a showcase for items such as maps, which are in daily use anyway. Sadly this was deleted from our plans, to save money. One must compromise over displays since an exhibition which is too interesting will attract numerous visitors who will comment and discuss what is shown to the detriment of those who are needing relative peace for study.

One wall of the public area contains a selection of books on open shelves which serve various functions. It demonstrates the range of subjects covered, allows the reader the opportunity to browse (which is an essential means of discovering information or seeking inspiration), it reduces fetching and carrying of "file" copies from the stack and helps to protect them from excessive handling. The section also includes a "new books" area allowing items to be put on public display immediately they are received and to stay there until catalogued.

The study room also contains examples of every other type of stock grouped into various "areas". Thus the illustrations catalogues and filing cabinets are grouped together and include a number of albums of photographs that can be consulted; the plans chests have an example of their contents displayed on the top as does the section devoted to handbills. Newspaper cuttings are housed together with a display of the newspaper titles in stock and a few examples that readers may consult. In each case the contents of the cabinets are accessible only on request. Departmental technology in the form of photocopier and microfilm readers are designed to be used by readers with a minimum of staff involvement. Placing the photocopier away from the staff desk has reduced the amount of service that readers sometimes demand and encourages most to read the instructions and operate it themselves.

Seating is at large flat tables each accommodating six readers, the absence of dividers allowing large items to be spread and giving staff an unimpeded view across them. A separate newspaper area has been established for those using bound volumes and incorporates slopes which prevent readers tipping volumes on to their knees.

Supplementing this personal study space is the separate "teaching area" in the stack; this has seating for 18 and is available to groups under the supervision of a teacher. It allows them opportunity to discuss and be taught without disturbing other users and has proved a most valuable facility.

The stack area occupies the space formerly allocated to the city archive store and houses the majority of the bookstock, all the newspapers, a negatives area, strong room and general dump — the latter carefully screened from casual visitors since, although the area is one of limited access, numerous visitors will be brought in to tour the parts others do not see.

The bookstock presents few storage problems, although in due course either high-density or mobile shelving will need to be installed as stock continues to be acquired. Newspapers are filed flat on deep shelving which lines three sides of the room and forms an island stack — and will need to be more tightly packed as the number of volumes increase. Much space is occupied by duplicate volumes which could be transferred elsewhere if necessary.

Negatives represent another area of growth and many are grouped around a staff desk which is the most isolated working area and used when compiling photographic orders. The strong room provides secure accommodation for items which we prefer not to issue casually such as extra-illustrated versions of county histories or undistinguished items which just happen to be unique copies.

Less important material which is acquired more frequently than it is accessioned is stored at the end of the stack whilst the floor provides space for numbered boxes of duplicate/loan material.

Since the stack houses so much of importance and is a closed area it can be designed to be thermostatically controlled independently of the public room and should also

have humidity control to ensure perfect storage conditions. Cutbacks in this area will prove costly in future conservation projects and are a short-sighted economy, as we are discovering.

Local studies staff assist readers, maintain a check on the use of material, fetch and carry and have essential roles in the accessioning of new items. The main enquiry desk is the nerve-centre of the department and is manned by two staff whenever possible. It should be situated near the main entrance so that arrivals can be assured of a friendly welcome and those leaving encouraged not to forget to return items. If such a situation is not possible then the room needs to be designed to direct readers past the staffing point by the layout of the display.

Staff need a clear view of the whole department which can be supplemented by an additional position at right angles to the readers' tables; introducing staff positions in the body of the room also makes them more approachable by readers and means they can service areas of stock; thus we have a table adjacent to the maps and newspaper cuttings areas which, because it is out of the main line of enquiries, makes it a relatively uninterrupted work area but enables staff to be on hand.

The main desk houses the telephone and all the necessary paraphernalia such as enquiry forms, guides to stock, cash float, magnifying glass, scissors, etc. The two positions each have a large flat area since it is here that most of the departmental routine such as taking newspaper cuttings, accessioning illustrations and even answering letters will be undertaken.

Beside this staff desk is an office where material can be accumulated, typing undertaken and discussions held with some pretence that it is not disturbing the studious atmosphere of the main area; it needs to have a view of the department and be visible to readers, yet slightly apart from them to allow some degree of privacy.

Our office has shelving along the wall visible through the open "porthole" and houses most-used areas of stock which would otherwise have to be fetched from the stack; out of sight are shelves holding recent accessions and other items requiring cataloguing and a bank of supplementary indexes. The main working area is a ledge which runs the length of the room; it houses the audio technology and typewriter and is generally invisible under piles of paper. Underneath are the current boxes of duplicates and binding and many others holding material to be accessioned.

From this office the librarian must oversee and plan a service for today but also have an eye to the future.

4. Acquiring and Conserving the Collection

The Inherited Stock

A local studies librarian will collect, preserve, organise and make available principally published material relating to his area. Many also have responsibility for archives, but that is outside my scope.

Defining limits of responsibility is inevitably complicated. In 1949 material relating to the University and colleges of Cambridge and their administration was excluded from our terms of reference. It was a decision that occasioned much debate and disagreement but ultimately it was the salvation of the collection since the University and its associated departments have over the centuries produced literally thousands of pamphlets about their three main aspects: the buildings which dominate the streets, the internal administration and the actual courses taught. These included Latin and Greek odes in profusion, debates and counter-debates on aspects of the examination system, college magazines and umpteen sermons preached before the University. John Pink tried valiantly to collect every one and they comprise a third of the items in his catalogue. But they relate to an organisation which has the facilities to look after its own literature and to which any serious student requiring such details will gain access. Had the decision not taken place the organisational difficulties would have been so great that the Cambridgeshire Collection might well be sitting, unsorted, in wire-guarded bookcases.

However, although we no longer cover the University, the reference library needs some information in order to answer enquiries from residents who are excluded from academic libraries. The reference staff, therefore, file back issues of some Cambridge magazines whilst we take others, they cover the University regulations whilst we maintain cuttings files about the student activities, they deal with the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race whilst we cover rowing on the Cam. Similar illogicality exists over the compilation of current information: they compile registers of firms which are based on our cuttings files; they maintain lists of local societies whilst we take their magazines which they consult for coming events.

Such illogicality, together with a divisional boundary which limits the area we cover; management policy which denies readers a whole-county collection; and information team priorities which see provision of ephemeral current information as of greater importance than the long-term local collection; — these are some of the reasons for the way our collection has developed. Another is the accident of history which allowed a multi-media resource to be amassed for a century and overlooked for two decades before being made to serve the needs of current users.

The present service is based on in-depth cataloguing and the fact that we have been able to index in depth is because our area of coverage and range of stock is comparatively narrow — we know a lot about a little.

However, having now had the opportunity to organise this collection in detail, we realise that the same theories and techniques could be used to cover similar material for a wider geographical area. (It was in recognition of this that the Library Association Local Studies Group supported an initiative from the Association's book editor for a detailed case study of the working of the Cambridgeshire Collection to which this monograph is a supplement. That now, after much work, this case study is not to be published by the Library Association is just part of the frustrations of the local studies librarian.)

Identifying New Material

"Book selection" is a term irrelevant to local studies librarians; there is no "selection": once items come within the scope of the collection then they need to be acquired; "selection" implies a choice, a weighing of the merits of titles, which does not apply here: good or bad, pious or pornographic, all are acquired once identified.

Bibliographies such as BNB record only a fraction of what is relevant and by the time it is listed the item will probably be out of print; one is dealing with short-run publications which are only offered to individual bookshops or newsagents or sold within the producing organisation or society.

Under such circumstances it is hardly surprising that a survey conducted in Leicester revealed that only 9 per cent of minor publications were being received in the local collection[21] and it would be a foolish librarian who claimed to be in any way comprehensive in his coverage of even current productions. The object, however, is to obtain all published material which reflects activities within the area, past, present and future — programmes celebrating the Queens' jubilees (1887, 1897 and 1977), county magazines, items relating to fossils, cholera, test-tube baby clinics, agricultural experimental stations, transport, industry, cookery, sewage, local government, elections, police, archaeology, history, war, topography, planning, biography, genealogy, reminiscence, art, music, poetry, fiction, works by local authors, libraries, publishing, religion and much more.

Local government produces much material, some of narrow subject interest such as publications on mathematics by the teachers' centres, others of far-reaching significance such as planning officer's reports on the traffic implications of a new shopping centre: all must be sought.

Within any organisation there may be annual reports, house magazines, external public relations newsletters and trade literature. Once does not decide *not* to collect it all, but will miss most: annual reports are most important, and one will collect them from every producing organisation discovered within the area; newsletters vary in value, a church magazine can be restricted to a religious message or be a community newsletter containing reminiscences or other historical articles worthy of indexing. As we strive for completeness once such an item has been identified we hope to bind a full set. This presents the problems of acquiring hundreds of such magazines monthly, without the assistance of any central supplier, and scanning each one both for articles and for references to newly published items such as church histories or other publications.

Apart from the intrinsic value of each scrap there is the importance of building up a complete record of a community for others to evaluate. As further items are acquired a more vivid picture emerges as those who have inspected the scrapbooks

compiled by Women's Institutes with their hairdressers' price lists and programmes of carol concerts will recognise. Such items can lose their appeal when removed into a central collection, yet how else can people have access to them? The Collection's desire to acquire such scraps will also lead to the deposit of more substantial items.

Even if one concentrates on "bookstock" the identification and filling of gaps depends on the skill of the collector, arriving in the right place at the right time and spotting the relevant item. Scanning the topographical section of booksellers' catalogues or shelves is obvious but implies that the proprietor recognises or chooses to emphasise this aspect. What of fiction, poetry or biography? In fact, virtually any shelf can hold material of relevance, and less formal jumble sales or market stalls may even produce more substantial results.

Bibliographies and footnotes can identify books which have then to be added to a "Wants" list and later acquired — these might well be found in the lending department and marked for transfer when no longer needed there. More often they will refer to articles which have appeared in journals which will be found to have published an immense amount of important and relevant items; despite checking all indexes to periodical literature and following up each footnote one can only discover a small proportion.

The modern output is even greater: only by actually scanning every issue of every women's magazine can even some of the articles be discovered — there is no alternative to pure good fortune and observation.

Trades fairs or careers conventions will provide many examples of trade literature from local companies; estate agents' offices have sales particulars for new housing estates the former village pub or ordinary houses in city streets. The streets themselves supply protest leaflets or advertising material via the numerous distributors of such ephemera. There are programmes of concerts or theatrical performances, bus timetables and tickets, election manifestos all of which the local collection will seek, for it is these scraps which will be of value to future researchers.

One benefit of being part of the public library service is that colleagues might note local items amongst new books or titles they discard; they can be encouraged to send in the ephemeral items they distribute over the branch library counter or find pushed through their letterboxes at home.

Another is that readers coming in to change their library books can be attracted by displays of what others have donated and encouraged to add to the files.

The more time spent checking and acquiring the more one will realise just how much there is to find — yet this is the basis of local studies librarianship — the collection of the printed material.

Acquisition

Newspapers

The obvious way to obtain newspapers is to subscribe, file and bind; however, the larger format issues inevitably arrive from the newsagent badly folded which reduces their potential shelf life. We have an arrangement with one company whereby they supply us free of charge with multiple copies of their evening and weekly titles for

cutting and binding, although where one title is a minor variation of another there is no alternative but to file merely a microfilm copy.

Files of older volumes may be available from the newspaper offices where they frequently occupy space that could be used more effectively by journalists. Library involvement in a company's microfilming of its stock is one method of encouraging it to deposit the back files; another is the growing public demand for information from the older volumes. Newspaper offices seldom have the facilities or the staff to service such interest and may welcome the library's initiative in accepting the problems.

Readers will often offer odd issues of yellowed papers which they have discovered lining drawers or in attics; these are accepted even though there may already be bound volumes in stock since one never turns donations away and they can be used in displays or bound with other issues from various dates to provide an insight into life at various periods for casual visitors.

One will also be offered newspaper cuttings, sometimes mounted, more often loose, which again one may have already, but these too are accepted since they can be deposited in a branch library or by their organisation complement our own way of filing them.

The maintenance of newspaper cuttings files is a time-consuming task and needs an ever-increasing amount of storage space. They constitute an irreplaceable source of information on all the issues that concern the contemporary community, from ambulance services and drugs problems to skateboarding and rate-capping. Of the 800 topics covered the most consulted are the village files and those which deal with local companies, since people applying for interviews take the opportunity to discover background details of the firms they hope to join. The cuttings are taken from the complete range of local newspapers together with certain items from the national press which are supplied by colleagues in the reference library. They present the researcher with the opportunity to study developments within the last 25 years and merely browsing through the files of railways will demonstrate just how important a record they provide, whilst a certain KGB General found the cuttings on civil defence worth journeying from his London embassy to see.

The choice of cutting is made by the professional staff and will include feature articles and letters as well as news stories and photographs.

Selection is not an activity to be taken lightly as we are determining to a large extent what information researchers will use — since few will have the time to turn to the original volumes and make their own surveys. One appreciates that people claim newspaper reports can be inaccurate or biased yet if one presents them together with alternative views contained in societies' newsletters or the factual record of council minutes then readers may make their own judgements.

Cuttings files can be microfiched to reduce storage and increase the potential life of the record and relevant fiche may be deposited in the appropriate local libraries to allow residents to consult them more easily.

Maps

Ordnance Survey lists provide the best means of keeping up to date with additional sheets and these represent by far the largest number of maps acquired. A decision

needs to be taken as to whether these are local collection or general reference stock, especially when the two departments may be on separate floors, or even in different buildings. Whilst the small-scale maps can easily be duplicated the larger editions are much more expensive and need bulky storage. We file them in the local collection where readers can compare the current editions with previous surveys, though the most common use is by individuals needing copies for planning processes. Ordnance Survey coverage is one area where some form of county agreement is needed so as to prevent duplication and ensure that somebody does have a particular sheet. The option of acquiring sheets on microfilm is one which needs consideration, especially as much updating is now available on film which is just not produced in the form of revised sheets. Microfilm also offers a method of acquiring missing copies of previous editions but here the difficulty of comparing and contrasting the detail shown is far greater.

Newly published street or county maps should be acquired as soon as noticed and a careful watch needs to be maintained in specialist shops for unusual plans such as those of wartime airfields or charts of local waterways.

Old maps fall into two categories; there are the folded sheets published by Ordnance Survey or Bartholomew which will be found in antiquarian bookshops or on market stalls for a few pence and these are worth acquiring since they will almost certainly be a slightly different version from those already in stock. The greater difficulty comes with nineteenth-century and earlier county maps where imprint or the addition of a railway line can alone distinguish a different edition. One cannot remember all the details of the hundreds of these sheets and so needs to make a careful note and check the existing catalogues before acquiring such relatively expensive items. Unless the catalogues are complete it is all too easy to acquire a sheet only to discover its duplicate lying in an unsorted pile.

Illustrations

County maps often feature an engraving of some part of the area and this is just one example of the pictures which will already be found in material housed in the collection — books and newspapers are other obvious sources. As a group illustrations come in many types from original paintings, prints or engravings to postcards, photographs, negatives and transparencies.

Additional items will be acquired through purchase, donation or by copying.

The current mania for postcard collecting has led to prices reaching levels which preclude our Collection purchasing more than a very few, but whereas the enthusiast will seek cards which are in mint condition the librarian will be more concerned with the scene depicted and this can be captured photographically without harming the original. With our own camera, lights and stand we copy some 1,800 pictures a year, some for our stock, others in response to a request for a copy to be used for research or private study. Our copying service is much cheaper than the fees charged by professional photographers who have to guarantee the quality of their work, but is usually excellent for the purpose needed and produces a profit for the publications programme. As the numbers of illustrations for which we have negatives increases so the need to copy items which are in stock is lessened.

If one contacts the mainly elderly people who send pictures to the "looking back" feature in the local newspapers they will usually lend their originals for copying and often donate them to the Collection where other people can benefit from them. A

similar sentiment prompts many others to donate negatives or colour transparencies for which they have no further use, whilst the impact of 35 mm photography will result in illustrations collections increasing more rapidly in the future as more of this material comes into stock.

For much of the material described, discovery of new items will come by chance, often when far away from the library, and thus present the problems of knowing whether the material discovered is in fact "new". It is here that personal knowledge of stock based on experience and the fact that one has catalogued it oneself becomes important but, if in doubt and the price is not too high, the best bet is to acquire it, for it can be added if necessary to the duplicate/loan files which exist in each category of stock. The actual purchase represents another departure from library routine since the accession might only cost a few pence and the market-stall owner will not appreciate the need to issue invoices or await receipt of an official order. A simple procedure to reimburse out-of-pocket expenditure on inexpensive items is essential.

Many items can be acquired free of charge: auction particulars for country houses will often include a potted history, plan and illustrations and be available on request from the estate agent. Similar particulars for other properties such as village schools, churches or public houses, brochures of new housing estates or farms can be acquired and will provide useful records not only of the actual property but of the price existing at the time of sale.

Sound Recordings

Nor should one overlook sound recordings. If one takes novels and poetry by local writers, trade literature from local companies and cuttings about the pop music scene one cannot ignore music by local performers, often featuring lyrics based on local events, which have been recorded in a local studio.

Tape recording implies oral history and is extremely time-consuming but the local collection can act as a depository for recordings made by other people and even the professionally-produced tapes from local radio, whilst the various talking newspapers for the blind can be encouraged to deposit the special feature tapes they make. Such recordings present yet more problems, both in respecting the rights of the person or organisation who made the recording, in the technical difficulties that indexing and even playing pose and in the storage and conservation of the tape itself.

Conservation and Storage

The local studies department thus holds a variety of types of material which do not feature elsewhere in the library system.

Pamphlets

Simple items such as pamphlets will form a higher proportion of the bookstock than elsewhere and need special attention. Although many can be bound individually there are others which for some reason do not warrant such treatment, but if these are filed on shelves, they will crumple, if filed in boxes or cabinets they need to be defaced with filing details. One solution is to place them in envelopes, writing filing details

along the top; these will offer some protection and allow them to be housed on shelves. However, the envelope itself will present problems since it is unlikely that the administration department will stock them in the appropriate size or quantity, thus necessitating a special order. Then the envelope itself will contribute to the destruction of the pamphlet it is protecting through the acidity contained in the paper. This in turn can be overcome by ordering archival envelopes from one of the specialist suppliers. However, the individual pages will deteriorate, since many of the items are printed on poor quality paper which will self-destruct because of its own acidity content. In the present system there is no realistic chance of preserving them since de-acidification and resizing or lamination are too expensive or time consuming and, in the latter case, would increase the bulk of each item to the extent that it would exacerbate the storage problems.

Such decay will occur whether or not the item is handled and if the stock does have only a short life it behoves us to catalogue it as fully as possible so that the information contained can be disseminated widely, yet at the same time lessen needless handling.

Books

Inevitably some books are going to be heavily used and will decay through such handling and this needs to be considered when items are acquired. Thus, when an important title is published one will acquire two or three copies; one will be processed as the "file" copy and placed on the closed-access shelves, whilst a second is allocated to the open-shelf stock where it will be more heavily used. Catalogue entries will contain a symbol directing readers to this accessible copy whilst the one in the stack is marked to remind staff that there is another copy which should be used in preference. When, as is often the case, the item needs to be bound, a third copy is obtained which serves as the open-shelf version until the others return. It is then added to the duplicate/loan stock.

Most duplicate items will be volumes which have been discarded from the circulation services whilst others will be donations or have been bought cheaply when the opportunity presented. As its name implies this stock is available for loan at the discretion of the staff and in response to individual need. Thus some may be sent on long-term loan to an adult class whilst others be allowed out overnight or for short periods. They also hold the potential to be used as outlier local collections in libraries, schools or colleges should the demand arise in the future, and when the file copies are finally too worn or are lost there is a chance that a replacement will be found in the duplicates sequence.

Newspapers

Newspapers are particularly subject to self-destruction because of the acidity of the newsprint, which is particularly serious in modern issues. Fortunately our newspaper cuttings files divert a great deal of the use of papers from 1960. Again, although one is aware of the potential of de-acidification and resizing to extend the life of the original we have no staff available to undertake this ourselves and such operations are costly. One can increase public awareness of the great importance of the local newspaper as a source for researchers through indexing projects and the publication of extracts relating to particular topics, both of which reduce wear on the originals

and make the use of microfilm more acceptable to users. Microfilming is undertaken jointly with two newspaper companies, covering some eight current titles and, in addition, retrospective files are being filmed in conjunction with other libraries or commercial organisations.

Illustrations

Illustrations, maps and handbills are similar in that they are all single sheet items, of varying sizes and cannot be filed on shelves but each presents different problems.

Illustrations vary from original paintings and eighteenth-century engravings to photographic negatives and transparencies, each presenting its own conservation problems. Use can be restricted by careful cataloguing, by fixing a small photographic copy on to the catalogue card and by using reproductions wherever possible, retrieving the original item only when the reader actually needs it.

The numerous prints and photographs need to be filed in cabinets, boxes or albums and need protection. A system such as we employ which files pictures, where possible, upright in negative envelopes means they can be stored economically but affords little protection to each item since it is the photograph which is supporting the covering and not the other way round. A more effective system is needed but will have to take account of the large numbers of accessions involved.

Maps

Maps are generally larger and can be much older, but apart from the Ordnance Survey sheets they will be comparatively little used. They need to be filed either vertically or horizontally in the appropriate plans chests. Vertical filing needs less floor space but necessitates a system whereby the sheet can be suspended and this introduces another step in the accessioning process.

Filing maps horizontally can be done immediately although in practice they need some form of protection; this can be either home-made using brown paper and polythene sheeting or bought-in from specialist suppliers of acid-free transparent coverings. Since accessions are rare this exercise need be conducted infrequently.

Ordnance Survey maps are heavily used and without protection soon become worn both by the constant need to remove sheets to retrieve those beneath them and through handling and copying by readers. Since these sheets have little intrinsic bibliographical value they can be mounted or laminated though this once more increases the space each needs.

Handbills and Playbills

Handbills present the same problems as maps, except that the items in the stock may well be unique. Many will have survived by being pasted in scrap books by Victorian collectors; however, to fit the scrapbooks they have had to be folded and if used will inevitably deteriorate along the fold. Their removal from such scrapbooks is a specialist process and once removed they need some other form of filing, placing additional pressure on plans' chests.

A large collection of playbills presents further problems: we have many thousands which had been rolled into annual bundles; these have been unrolled and catalogued

and then filed in bookjackets — a commodity that can be purloined from other departments. However these jackets are themselves not acid free — which is causing further difficulties.

Whilst such specialist protective coverings might be purchased from library or departmental bookfunds the cabinets which are needed to file them may be subject to a spending embargo on furniture. Thus microfilming which must increasingly be employed to reduce use of the original item may be undertaken, but where there is no funding for sufficient machines on which the film can be viewed, the original paper copy will still be heavily used. Inability to buy basic, though essential, furniture means that one has to acquire and adapt various oddments discarded by other departments. A change in the lending library layout might release counters which can be pressed into service as display benches, provided the various holes cut in them can be covered by carefully positioned maps; elsewhere transfer of county responsibilities might release large numbers of boxfiles, provided one arrives before the dustmen.

In such ways the storage and conservation of valuable items can be maintained only with difficulty and many items crumble slowly into decay.

Security

Loan items which are not returned represent the more obvious losses from our stock and are one reason why the service is not publicised. A few books are lost from the open shelves over the course of a year though often items spotted as missing during one morning's shelf-check will have returned by the next, and others have subsequently been located on the local collection shelves at branch libraries.

All other material is produced on receipt of a request form completed by the reader which includes provision for his name and address. Such forms allow staff to learn the identity of their users and often lead to new contacts. Forms are retained as a security check and on at least one occasion a young man who had given a false name and address was surprised to receive a telephone call from the department — he had been remembered from a previous visit when the now-missing book had been requested by him in his proper name.

Request forms are essential, however, for another reason since such is the imbalance between enquirers and staff that readers have to make their own selection of material to a degree not experienced in other departments. Thus whereas in the lending library the readers' adviser will guide enquirers to the appropriate shelves and then check both returned books and reserve stock for a particular topic, in the local collection readers will often merely be shown the relevant section in the catalogues and left to make their choice.

5. Organising the Information

Many library local collections reflect the achievement of one person who has grown up with the collection and knows each book from cover to cover. Should such a person have an infallible memory and be on duty for each minute of each day, should he never grow old or retire then readers can be assured of an excellent service. Eventually the unthinkable happens and the guider is not there; then the titles mean little and the contents are worthless.

Catalogues

There is another alternative: a catalogue which attempts not only to record author and title but also content, which anticipates potential demand and constructs entries to meet it. Thanks to the accident of history that is what we have.

John Pink published a catalogue of the local material he had collected, the final edition of which was issued in 1899. It comprised a chronological list of titles with no attempt at subject arrangement and allocated a shelf-mark to each. Since that date the material had been moved to various rooms, much had been disposed of in the purge of 1949, and, of course, in addition many more items had been acquired. A classification scheme had been adopted by 1927 and by the mid-1960s many of the books that were housed in the local collection room carried a class number. A small catalogue cabinet contained cards in a variety of handwriting and cataloguing styles. Although basically an author catalogue there had at some time been the intention of creating alphabetical subject headings since many cards gave indications as to where these should have been made, and a few had been typed.

Wherever one looked there was material to be catalogued; one could alternate from the discipline of working along shelves that contained books which were classified though not always catalogued, to the fun of piles of unsorted pamphlets and articles which had never seen the cataloguer's stamp.

This situation may well apply in many local collections today and be despaired of as an impossible task — in the present economic and managerial climate there is just not the time to catalogue it. There was no time or support 20 years ago either but the job was done and today a modern device such as a memory typewriter will reduce the effort by some 50 per cent, since details can be entered in various parts of its memory and retrieved individually when required.

Cataloguing and classification are concepts that many librarians view with horror, recalling distant lectures on Anglo-American codes and analytical entries. Modern accessions practice results in many books being delivered to libraries complete with catalogue cards whilst other services are available via the magic of on-line and computerisation. All this is irrelevant to the local collection where cataloguing is an essential in-house activity.

Books

Book cataloguing consists of describing each item — who wrote it, published it and when — and its physical characteristics. Many will be the work of corporate bodies, be variant editions, extracts from unidentified sources, undated or otherwise complicated. Cataloguing will involve checking bibliographies, dictionaries of anonymous or pseudonymous literature and will need the full range of resources available in a major reference library.

Having made the author entry one must turn to the content of the book. Each chapter needs to be scanned and entries made for any topics which are relevant. These subject entries can be entered under alphabetical headings or allocated a class number from whatever classification scheme is in use. One can adopt both systems constructing both an alphabetical and a classified catalogue. The first section mixes authors and subjects in one sequence allowing readers to consult it under village name or city building and either find items listed or be referred to whatever other heading has been preferred. In this way the book catalogue can act as a thesaurus for all other indexes.

The classified sequence is used to allow information to be brought together more conveniently — thus the student of social history will find at the appropriate class number not only the “histories” of that period but also files of periodicals produced during those years, biographies of people who influenced it and even fiction with a significant period feel. To separate these supplementary items from the pre-digested “histories” they can be recorded as subdivisions combining class numbers with a colon.

Detailed cataloguing is essential if the local collection is to meet the demands of its readers and this is not a speedy process. Every item needs to be evaluated and this cannot be done by relying on a publisher’s blurb — it has to be scanned page by page. Corners can be cut and entries omitted but with such reduction the value of the catalogue decreases.

Consider, for example, *Sherbourne, Oxford and Cambridge*, the recollections of Mrs Ernest Stewart Roberts published by Hopkinson in 1934. Apart from the initial problem of learning her own Christian name, cataloguing is uncomplicated. When checking the text one finds that on p. 163 she recounts the visit of the Prince of Wales to Cambridge in 1905 to inspect the University Rifle Volunteers, tells how she was introduced to him in the courtyard of Gonville and Caius college where her husband was Master, describes the dress she wore and the flowers she carried. This is exciting for we have an original photograph of such an event but had previously not known the details and on checking they match up — dress, flowers and all. We now have picture and eyewitness account and can construct entries for both to relate to the other. However, on checking, one discovers that the Prince of Wales was King by 1905: the lady has got her dates wrong. Further research establishes that he came in 1896 yet this visit is not mentioned in what was thought to be a comprehensive survey of royal visits to Cambridge and this omission needs to be notified to the survey’s author for addition to her records. To exploit the subject content of this part of Mrs Roberts’ book one needs entries for the visit, the College, her reminiscences and the Rifle Volunteers. After the death of her husband she moved to a local village where she lived during the First World War and she describes the impact of that conflict on the community together with details of Zeppelin sightings. This needs two additional entries — one in the book catalogue under World War I and a second under village in a separate news index.

This book contains an error of fact in that the date of the royal visit was wrongly recorded, which might call into question the accuracy of other details. Against this, her description of her meeting with the Prince can be confirmed by the photographic record — or possibly she described the scene using the picture as a stimulus to memory. Every book is subject to error of either fact or interpretation and the researcher will take this into consideration when evaluating his material. However, many of our users will not qualify for the status of "researcher" and may accept whatever is presented in print at its face value. The local studies librarian needs to collect everything published on a topic but can offer cautionary warnings in the form of notes on the catalogue card when he has reason to question the accuracy of a source and can likewise accentuate the more important items.

Such a detailed catalogue containing over 60,000 entries constitutes a resource which has a value outside the local collection itself. Although of obvious importance to the topographer, the classified sections covering subjects such as electricity supply, trade unionism and nonconformity will prove to be amongst the most important records of such material and will interest the researcher in Manchester as well as Cambridge.

Publication in the form of a printed catalogue would entail a great deal of editorial work and layout but an alternative is merely to microfilm each entry and publish a microfiche catalogue. As well as benefiting researchers elsewhere it meets one of the identified problems confronting schoolchildren with projects: it was observed that they spent so much time at the catalogue selecting material they had too little time to use it. A microfiche copy of the local collection catalogue placed at each library in the county enables them to choose their items before they visit the department. It also enables the Teachers' Centres to disseminate the information concerned via their computer links, since although each school has a terminal they do not have the more basic technology of a microfiche reader. Once readers know which book they need it may be possible to locate a loan copy, either in the lending library or by utilising the department's duplicate/loan stock thus reducing the need for people to visit. One step further is to use data transfer direct to the school computer screen.

All such developments seem fanciful at present when the reference library is just itself adopting a micro-computer but will come probably sooner than one appreciates; certainly funding is currently available for the computer hardware (even though there is an embargo on filing cabinets). One step has been with the schools' own production of programs based inevitably on the enumerator's returns of the census; once individual classes have extracted the data relevant to their own settlement they can make a copy of the program which is available for other schools to borrow. The Cambridgeshire Collection has been nominated as the link between schools and has the option of allowing other readers to make use of the program within the department — assuming we acquire a BBC computer. Currently we are assisting the manufacturer, a Cambridge company, with illustrations for a brochure they are producing to demonstrate the importance of computer technology in schools so perhaps we may be able to jump the library's queue. Certainly such co-operation with Pye, the telecommunications giant, resulted in the gift of radio and cassette equipment which is in regular use.

The future will doubtless bring developments which enable computers to provide access to content of local newspapers and this will solve some of the challenges that this area of stock poses.

The News Index

Newspapers contain four separate types of information: feature articles, advertise-

ments, illustrations and news. Of these the easiest category to identify and exploit are the feature articles which are usually stumbled across by chance when searching for something else. They can be equated with the articles appearing in periodicals and thus entered in the book catalogue or added to the news index.

The news index is an essential part of our organisation and allows snippets of information from a variety of sources to be recorded when located — thus Mrs Roberts' Zeppelin attack will be entered on a card which already records reminiscences of a feast day or memories of the first public transport which have been published in a village magazine. It is used when the information discovered does not warrant a full typed catalogue entry and, although filed separately, duplicates the arrangement of the main catalogue. Thus the researcher can consult both under the same heading whilst the general reader may be content with the items listed in the book catalogue.

The news index has expanded to meet the challenge presented by the "news" content of the older papers.

Information can easily be found when one knows the date, but often the date itself is what one is seeking. Newspapers themselves often produce a "Review of the year" so that if one is uncertain whether it was 1924 or 1925 that a footbridge was opened one can scan the summary of the year's events and avoid a plod through the whole paper. Another useful feature are the "Peeps from the past" when a selection of news from the same week of 25, 50 or 100 years ago is reproduced and these can be filed chronologically thus summarising events over a number of years.

But all this is by definition selective and the selection has not been made by local studies staff who know the sort of questions being posed. Eventually there must be an index to the newspaper files. Immediately one must define the limits of such indexing since the papers, though local in title, in fact cover a wide geographical area as well as carrying national and international stories culled from the London press. Our first detailed project was to index the *Cambridge Chronicle* starting from our first issue, that of 4 January 1770, and to record all information relating to Cambridgeshire & Isle of Ely. The first issues contained very little to be indexed but as years passed the paper slowly became more detailed. From the start the intention was to give a brief abstract of the information contained and to make as many entries as necessary to exploit the subject content — thus stagecoach accidents would be entered under both subject and place. Items were entered on cards whose headings conformed to those used in the book catalogue. By the time 50 years had been indexed it was taking some 14 hours to complete one year but the work was providing so much information that it amply repaid the time taken. Originally this indexing could be undertaken on the enquiry desk but changing circumstances meant that the time that could be devoted slipped away and the project was too complicated to delegate. It was restructured in a simplified form by using volunteers to index just the village news listed in the "Town and County" column where the editors had themselves allotted brief descriptive headings. All that was needed was a card for each village and these headings copied on to it with additional notes where necessary. By omitting the largest settlements a year could be indexed quite quickly making it an interesting and rewarding project. When the cards were filed subject entries were made for topics which had a wider interest — such as incendiarism or railway development.

Yet this is only the first stage, even as far as village information is concerned, as much more of relevance can be found in the advertisements, court cases and even in the main body of the paper itself. These can each be tackled as separate projects

such as compiling “contents” sheets listing the major stories under date and page order. These sheets are themselves indexed before being filed in chronological order to be scanned when period information is the main requirement of the user.

By splitting the indexing into manageable sections in this way one can begin to utilise the information contained in the columns of one newspaper, and by repeating the exercise with the other newspapers build up a clearer impression of the differences both in coverage and emphasis between titles, which is sufficient in itself to make such an analysis an important study[22].

Additionally one can encourage people to use the indexes and transcribe the information recorded. Thus in Cambridgeshire a number of groups have produced “Village chronicles” which report the happenings in their settlement between 1770 and 1899, the period now indexed. In this way one can not only produce a fascinating village history but also offer researchers the opportunity to build up a picture of everyday life in several communities as reported in one newspaper, making the information available without increasing the wear on the original volumes. In the meantime readers using the indexes can be made to use the microfilm version of the paper since they are turning to specific dates and pages for information they know to be there.

More recent information is contained in newspaper cuttings files which can have a simple alphabetical arrangement; however, cross-references to these headings from all relevant sections of the book catalogue will unify the two aspects of the collection.

Illustrations

Newspapers started to use illustrations after 1880 though photographs were not generally used in our titles until 30 years later. These can be catalogued *in situ* and comprise the third main area of stock to be considered. They will also be featured in books and on maps as well as in a variety of original formats from eighteenth-century engravings to modern transparencies.

Cataloguing will need to answer the questions “where?” “when?” and “who?”. Identification of place depicted may be simply a matter of reading the caption or description, but if not one looks for clues. A street scene may show a name above the shop doorway or the route number of a bus, a postmark might indicate where it was posted — which might be the town concerned. If everything fails there is one almost infallible remedy — put it on display in the lending department under a large notice which asks for help.

Having established the location the next problem is date; it is easy to overlook the obvious such as a poster in a window advertising some forthcoming event or the date of the postmark — which might be several years after the picture was taken. Otherwise, features such as tramlines or even fashions may provide a clue.

The “who” relates to the person who engraved or published the print or the postcard publisher who issued it; care taken to build up indexes of such people will often allow an undated picture to be linked with another whose date is established.

One needs a classification scheme to emphasise the subjects depicted which, at the most simple, will merely be the place or street, but a single view may include a milkcart, tram, window cleaner or public house, each of which warrants additional entries; others will depict subjects such as agricultural activity or snow scenes, or express period “feel” — perhaps by a recruiting poster shown on a pub wall. As with other aspects of stock, attention to detail makes the material much more valuable for users.

Whilst individually cataloguing each picture is the ideal it is not feasible with our current staffing to undertake such detailed work for every item. Thus, whilst street scenes within a village would be individually catalogued, together with views of the windmill or school, the multitude of snapshots of Mothers' Union outings, baby shows or families posing for wedding snaps in their back gardens are just given an accession number and listed on sheets of paper with a "see also" entry made in the catalogue; however, the subject-interest views — such as the baby shows — will be given their own added entries in the main catalogue.

Unprinted negatives are similarly listed and cross-referenced. Although the most significant will be printed and fully catalogued, they are in the minority. Not only would it be too costly an exercise to print everything but it would then put additional pressure on storage space. However, glass negatives can be re-photographed on to microfilm to provide positive copies which can be easily used on a normal microfiche reader.

One large expansion which can be envisaged is in the field of colour transparencies. Often these will be unique views — and in colour — which repay individual cataloguing, but inevitably there will also be many that show the same "tourist attraction". However, these have an importance for use on book jackets or as stills in conjunction with a colour film. Here it will be the slightly unusual viewpoint or particularly good use of light which will be a deciding factor and the best arrangement will be one which enables a variety of shots of the same subjects to be studied side by side.

Special collections will need separate arrangements and the librarian may find it useful to construct albums of views depicting topics which are in greatest demand — for example, a redevelopment area as it was before change where adjacent streets would be scattered alphabetically by the classification scheme. There is also a need for a general collection of interesting old pictures so that the casual reader may browse through them.

Maps

Maps present fewer problems of classification for there are relatively few thematic types — geology, soil survey, land utilisation — and relevant class numbers from the book classification schedules can be employed. They do, however, present the local studies librarian with some of his most difficult cataloguing decisions since many editions of county maps can only be recognised by minor variations of detail. Should a published cartobibliography be available this can merely exacerbate the situation since inevitably the local collection will have acquired many sheets not available to the compiler. Frustration is increased by the knowledge that the maps themselves, though probably the oldest items in the collection, have little intrinsic research potential for many users.

The publication of the one-inch Ordnance Survey sheets provides the historian with the first detailed record of our county, but it would take a historian to produce an effective catalogue entry. As the introduction to the David & Charles reprint of the Cambridgeshire sheet indicates it is "a composite document embodying material from a succession of dates, an engraving of 1836, based on an original survey executed between 1808 and 1822 but revised in 1834 and 1835 and subsequently subjected to minor revision, apart from the addition of railway developments on a series of electrotypes plates"[23].

Urban maps present other difficulties since they will vary in detail, some containing a representation of housing development whilst others merely show the outline of the streets. They will contain discrepancies which make dating difficult — for example, one apparently detailed map contrives to show both the railway station (opened 1844) and a lock which was filled in eight years earlier. The larger-scale multi-sheet surveys can be marked on base maps with coloured dots to indicate one's holdings of the various editions although an index by village name will allow readers to select the appropriate sheets more quickly.

The four main catalogues indicated above — books, news index, illustrations and maps — may be the basis of departmental organisation but will be supplemented by numerous others, each of which has its own importance and each of which needs to be inter-related to the others.

Thus the handbills collection with its circus posters, reward notices, "last dying words and confessions" broadsheets, election addresses, etc, will probably be unique. Items need to be brought to the attention of serious researchers yet protected from needless handling by the casual user. One way this may be achieved is by constructing a separate handbills catalogue recording the content of each item and including detailed name and classified indexes. Wherever such an index heading is made a card can be added to the main book catalogue referring users to the separate catalogue of handbills. The researcher will follow this link, or can have it brought to his attention, whilst the non-specialist will usually build up his booklist without calling for this relatively ephemeral material.

Similar links may be made to the display advertisements and billheads, combined windmills record or tape recordings catalogues, whilst the more important of the sales particulars may warrant a full entry under place in the book catalogue.

Some of the other specialist indexes — to local biography, clockmakers, street names, photographers and engravers will be on open access whilst others will probably be amongst those kept adjacent to the cataloguing table although still available to those who notice their availability in the published "Guide to catalogues and indexes".

Although these supplementary catalogues will be initiated by the local studies librarian as part of an overall strategy to enable the full potential of his stock to be available to those who need it, many of them will be maintained by other staff as part of their involvement in the organisation of the department.

Staff

A local studies librarian must use whatever staff he is allocated or can obtain to the best advantage. To a large extent his success will be based on the personal enthusiasm of the people involved and they in turn will be motivated by him.

In the old days one could acquire staff who were not making the grade elsewhere — in the same way that one took others' discarded furniture. One would then infuse a degree of fanaticism and loyalty and inspire them to take an interest in their work. With such staff anything is possible.

The best recruits seem to be those who come to the department without experience elsewhere and who can be indoctrinated with the department's ways of doing things; conversely staff who have been "trained" to catalogue by somebody else's standards seem to refuse to adopt a new procedure. In the same way post-graduate

assistants have generally been a failure since they have lost the essential desire to learn and a willingness to accept new ideas — they have been influenced by people who have themselves had no experience of local studies departments and their potential.

Whatever staff one acquires need to be used to their best advantage. Often people can co-operate with and inspire one another; at other times friction can add to the gross overwork, an indication that the leadership is failing. Usually when one person is suffering from stress another will be at peak enthusiasm.

Local studies asks far more of junior staff than any other department. They have to be taught to use catalogues and locate all the various types of stock and have to man the enquiry desk sometimes without professional supervision (a situation which would not be allowed in the lending library).

To the non-professional staff can be allotted a wide range of duties both of departmental routine and as an aid to accession and organisation. The most obvious of these is maintaining newspaper cuttings files which involves cutting marked articles, photocopying them on to A4 sheets, allocating each to the appropriate heading and, after checking, filing them. These files constitute a major resource which can provide sufficient information for school village projects and answer many other enquiries but is a routine which is somewhat boring, making it an ideal task to be undertaken between enquiries. The accessioning, scanning and filing of periodicals and annual reports is another routine which involves much time and these are allotted to each of our two junior staff. They also share other routines such as acquiring and cataloguing sales particulars, copying and processing photographic orders, cataloguing duplicate books, maintaining stationery supplies and publications sales records, etc. Each has her responsibilities and is encouraged to make the job her own although everything is checked before being finally added to stock. This ensures it conforms with established practice and allows other staff the opportunity to be aware of acquisitions.

Much of this work has to be done at the enquiry desk and is subject to interruption by readers, and so staff must develop the ability to work carefully under pressure. Often staff will develop their own interests and can be used for indexing projects, while others will need the reassurance of a basic routine task and resist interesting alternatives. One must strike a balance between departmental priorities and maintaining a contented staff relationship.

The main enquiry point is staffed whenever possible by a chartered librarian — usually the Sub-Librarian — who will, therefore, handle the majority of enquiries. He too has a wide range of work between interruptions, including cataloguing illustrations, maintaining files of Ordnance Survey maps and checking allocated newspaper cuttings. To this is added answering postal enquiries which means that quite often letters will be researched and written between other enquiries and telephone calls, involving considerable mental strain as well as increasing the delay in answering such enquiries and so increasing the backlog as still more arrive.

Anything not specifically allocated to other staff devolves upon the local studies librarian. The most important responsibility is for bookstock and all such accessions are catalogued by myself. Partly this is to ensure continuity, partly because delegation to another would involve considerable time in training and in checking subsequent entries. The book catalogue is the key to the whole department and as such needs the most experienced operative.

Book cataloguing, however, seems to occupy a small percentage of the time spent off the enquiry desk and is just sufficient to keep up-to-date with single-time accessions with the occasional attack on bulk donations, new periodicals and the backlog. If one is being effective as a collector then items will be acquired daily: there are few occasions when there is less to catalogue at the end of the day than there was at the beginning.

Paper of other types is constantly accumulating — letters, reports and questionnaires that cannot be delegated, memos and messages to contact people who called when one was out. It is easy to arrive at a situation when one is spending more time shuffling papers than dealing with them. Much time is spent on talking — to those planning projects, people seeking advice, publishers, "VIPDs" (very important potential donors) and others whose assistance will be a long-term benefit.

Volunteers

Many libraries have embarked on long-term projects under the Manpower Services Commission Community Programmes which involve unemployed young people in indexing newspapers, cataloguing illustrations or other projects. Such schemes can achieve great results but need time to set up and administer and considerable participation by specialist staff which may overwhelm both the individual librarian and the department to which they are attached. One fears that the sheer numbers of "assisters" would outnumber the staff and add further stress.

An alternative is to use individual volunteers who come on an unstructured part-time basis and to tailor work to their interests. They are not used to answer reader enquiries or assist in any tasks which are the normal responsibility of staff but undertake work which benefits the department yet cannot be accommodated within our present workload.

Much of this has revolved around newspapers, listing major stories, indexing and transcribing village news to make the information available without recourse to the original volumes. The staff involvement is limited, the issue figures are boosted by the number of volumes produced and the amount of index cards or notes produced can be assimilated and filed reasonably easily. Although there are some problems with volunteers who come to see the department as a second home and the staff as their confidants these are acceptable in view of the benefit received.

Potential Donors

The local studies librarian is a collector; it is a role we have inherited and our collection has an assured future. Other collectors are not so sure of the fate of their material and some wish their accumulations to live on after them. The offer of a donation of local material is one which must be encouraged and the librarian will develop contacts and friendships with a variety of such potential donors over a period of many years. As with volunteers it is easy to maintain a relationship when meetings are well spaced but should the donor become too frequent a visitor it becomes difficult to ensure that they receive the same courtesy and consideration accorded to other readers.

Similar considerations apply to other regular visitors, for local history is a hobby which many pursue with an enthusiasm which can overwhelm tired staff who still have to

match and share their interest in whatever topic — buses, theatres or village history. Yet these people are most important ambassadors for the library and must feel that the librarian's door is open — they need to be aware of his problems yet remain convinced of his support and encouragement. Others will wish to discuss projects which can only be developed with the librarian's advice, contacts or ideas.

Many visitors will be involved in planning projects for school or college and will seek inspiration or wish to discuss the feasibility of their projected topic. This puts great responsibility on the librarian for poor advice might result in failure whilst the choice of a good topic itself virtually ensures success. When these are added to the hundreds of other enquiries the local studies librarian has the opportunity to learn more of what is being researched than anybody else; he is a source of information and, frequently, inspiration.

Publications

One regular enquiry is for advice on how to get the results of research published and it is easy to commit oneself to many private hours of reading scripts or even putting them into type. Yet without practical knowledge such advice can only be tentative, revealing yet another deficiency in one's service.

Publication usually revolves around finance and if the reader is prepared to stand the cost he must either go to a printer or contact an agency or publisher who will handle the process for him. Because of his contacts the local studies librarian can sometimes suggest a publisher who might be willing to fund the operation and co-operation with one such press has resulted in numerous texts being made available for sale at modest cost. For the author and researcher the availability of studies on specific topics such as clay tobacco pipes or coprolites are most valuable; for the bookseller, however, they present difficulties since they demand as much time in paper-work and selling as hardback volumes for which the commission is much greater in cash terms. Few now attempt to maintain a comprehensive file of the titles which have proliferated.

With booksellers expressing reluctance one must look for other outlets such as local newsagents or members of relevant societies. The library might seem an obvious outlet, especially as it may run its own publications programme.

From the library point of view the difficulties are less financial than administrative since to supply dozens of branch libraries with booklets for sale presents problems which are compounded, when one sells all its stock and the librarian is faced with the decision whether to buy in more or transfer unsold copies from elsewhere. The time involved in maintaining stock records is enough to be irksome on top of other pressures.

Library staff themselves may be reluctant to take on additional responsibilities especially if the library does not benefit from the sale; stock can become relegated to the back of the counter and overlooked until it is too dishevelled to be sold.

In central libraries the obvious selling point is either the entrance hall or the most-used department — the lending library. Here again staff resistance may prevent such a selling position being incorporated and so material is placed elsewhere in less obvious spots where the readers have to seek it out. The most likely place may be the local studies department itself which is the less-visited part of the public library.

Although we take copies of titles which have originated from our stock our total sales income is only a few pounds each week and does not really justify the time spent in administering it.

The library may have its own publications programme: despite the problems of selling, it is an obvious way of utilising material in our stock by making it available to others and taking a profit.

Publications may be single-sheet items such as maps or postcards where all that is needed is a copy together with some notes. These can be produced cheaply and sold at large percentage profits, although the income will be in pence.

Inevitably people will wish to move on to more prestigious projects involving the production of a text. This may simply be a reprint of something which has both merit and sales potential, although these judgements are not always easy. If a new work is to be produced the difficulties multiply since somebody has to decide the subject, commission the author, judge the quality of the text, arrange for copy-editing as well as seek quotations, arrange production, market it and chase repeat orders, etc, all of which take an inordinate amount of time and energy. Provided this time is found from within the library or is given voluntarily, then many productions are possible, but if the publication has to be costed realistically the sums rise alarmingly.

Other ways of utilising stock are to make it available to others to publish and charge a reproduction fee. In this way there is no financial commitment and the income is considerable in the context of the cashflow of the publications programme. Sometimes the reproduction fees can be taken in the form of copies of the publications which can be added to stock or sold.

The Libraries Publications Committee is just one of the bodies in which the local studies librarian may be tempted to participate. If there is no local studies group within the library he may find support and encouragement by participating in the Curators' panel or the meetings of the local branch of the Society of Archivists — providing he can get an invitation to attend. Local history or antiquarian societies may provide useful contacts as well as support, and attendance at meetings organised by such a group can often result in donations or information from people who would not usually visit the library. On a broader basis there is the British Association for Local History which seems now to be aware of the existence of local studies libraries, not least through the excellent work of its Field Officer.

Within the library profession there is, of course, the Library Association Local Studies Group on whose committee I have been privileged to serve since its inception as a branch of RSIS in 1975. Attendance at such meetings has been very revealing since initially it was dominated by library school lecturers and by local studies librarians from the largest metropolitan districts. It became very apparent that their form of local studies librarianship was very different from that practised in the shire counties where such staff are virtually non-existent. One can sympathise with the problems of colleagues in Birmingham whose 20 staff have to answer an average of 1,000 enquiries each — but such sympathy is touched with envy when one knows that one's own four staff deal with 2½ times that number.

The decision to attend such meetings, however, means that one is not in the department and that one's colleagues are consequently under greater pressure; there will also be the additional backlog of accessions and paperwork to catch up with. These factors will influence the outside commitments one chooses to make.

6. The Local Studies Library and the Community

The local studies librarian has opportunities to develop a more active role within the community. Co-operation with both individuals and the professionals can bring substantial rewards, and it is hoped that ways of achieving a satisfactory dialogue with other groups and individuals can be further explored.

Promotion

The most effective publicity is the incessant trickle of acknowledgements contained in newspaper articles, books and school projects together with personal recommendations from those who have found the collection helpful and interesting.

Local Radio

Local radio offers the opportunity to reach thousands of people in their own homes. The objectives are publicity for the collection and its services and to build up support and interest throughout the county for the work we are doing. Again, the time involved has to be considered. Elsewhere our colleagues have taken the responsibility of co-ordinating a daily script on a local history topic which is read by the radio presenter[24]. This is a heavy staff time commitment against which is balanced the knowledge gained by researching the two-page script, which can be filed, and acknowledgement on the radio.

Our involvement with a BBC local radio station has been along different lines some of which has involved actual broadcasting of three different types. One exercise involved selecting a current local story and showing that the same thing had happened in the same week at some other period between 1770 and 1934. This was based on the indexes to the *Cambridge Chronicle* and involved choosing a likely subject and scanning the cards until a similar event was located. What was more amazing was that browsing through the paper for the week selected would identify other stories which matched national or international happenings. It was a remarkable achievement, continued weekly for six months, but was the least productive of the projects since the script had little value after the broadcast.

A second exercise was to supplement the current vogue for reminiscence by choosing similar personal experiences written by people a century or more ago and reading them on the air. This personal account of everyday life evokes a sense of history which stimulates interest, especially when it related to a local place. Searching stock for appropriate passages is an exercise which reawakens awareness of material such as Parliamentary Enquiries which record verbatim evidence lending itself to dramatisation. The extracts once scripted can be used again and can form the basis of articles in newspapers and periodicals.

More tangible benefit can be obtained through encouraging listeners to participate. Here one introduces a topic such as "radio", "cinema" or "evacuees" by reading extracts from reminiscences already in stock and inviting additional memories. If the choice of topic is successful and the introductory readings stimulating enough much can be learned. People who took in evacuees phone with their experiences, or pianists from the silent-picture era join the conversation. Here one is dependent on the expertise of the radio presenter who is trained to talk to people and put questions to stimulate further memories. The staff who answer the calls will also record the telephone numbers of those phoning thus allowing one to build up more contacts.

One can use such interest to promote not only the local collection itself but also the role of the public library and the expertise of the professional librarian. This can form the basis of an illustrated lecture which can be delivered to numerous groups from Rotary to Over Sixties, primary school to conferences, in city centre lecture theatre or village hall.

Promotional Talks

With increasing pressure from enquiries, with accessions back-logs accumulating and the general problems of stress one might argue that promotional talks should not take place. Seen on a profit/loss account, however, they are essential.

The loss is the time involved in both preparing and delivering the talk and, in total hours, certainly is excessive. However, preparation time can be reduced by developing a standard format incorporating sections which can be personalised to reflect the interests of the group addressed. Far more time is involved in travelling to and from the venue and delivering the presentation than can be justified during working hours. It is, therefore, usually undertaken in the evening with a fee to cover expenses since these cannot be charged to the County Council. Costs such as dinner allowance and mileage would still be excessive for many groups based in rural areas, so often, like the theoretical overtime involved, they are not charged.

The standard talk sketches the role of the local studies department alongside museums and record offices, puts it into context within the library service and outlines the types of stock collected, illustrating each section with transparencies which are relevant to the gathering — thus slides five to seven show books about the village, number ten features a local map and 30 to 35 depict old illustrations. It explains the catalogues and indexes necessary to allow the material to be located and shows how we assist everybody from grandchild to grandmother. It will be interesting and, because it depicts their own area, will be remembered and discussed both in the home and at work and so publicised by word of mouth. Such supporters will often ensure that material that would otherwise be destroyed is presented to the Collection and many donations can result from a single evening's work.

Few people, however, will actually visit the Collection as a result of such a talk — which is fortunate since our lack of display facilities would prove a disappointment and large numbers of casual visitors would swamp our space. However, the knowledge provided and the fact that we are seen as unofficial and friendly will stimulate people to see not only the local collection but also the library service in a wider context.

Perhaps the more important benefit, however, will be the contacts one makes. Each village has its "historian" to whom residents will turn for information and to whom they will give material they do not require. Such people may be known to the local

studies librarian only by repute or through the columns of the local newspaper yet within their area they are the specialists. Thus the talk does not attempt to present a history of the village for such would serve only to demonstrate one's own lack of knowledge or overshadow the home-grown expert but must lay the foundation for co-operation, hoping for an invitation to inspect his collection and to learn under what conditions other researchers might have access to it. One might also sow the seeds of a future donation but this is not the prime object, it is the contacts that matter.

Local Studies SDI

If one could find a way of linking these subject specialists with the material in the local collection and other users then the circle would be complete.

One way to accomplish this is to enter their names into the catalogues alongside the other resources and the excuse for doing so is an SDI system. Those people who have a particular interest complete profile forms on which they specify the subjects they are studying. The form is analysed and distinctively coloured cards entered into appropriate catalogues at whatever headings new accessions would be recorded. The card summarises information wanted, records the date by which the project will have lapsed and the name of the researcher. Such a project fulfils three functions.

- (1) It enables us to notify readers of accessions which are relevant to their study since when catalogue cards are added at that heading the coloured SDI card reminds us of their interest.
- (2) When we notice that the project will have finished we can write to the student announcing our intention of removing his name from our files and at the same time take the opportunity of asking to see — and possibly copy — the final dissertation. Since we will have shown an interest at the start it is quite usual for the project to be deposited, thus filling another gap in the material we can offer to others.
- (3) Perhaps more importantly, the system allows us to put people in touch with people since the profile form seeks information about the reader's own collection or personal knowledge and also asks whether we may refer other researchers to him should our resources fail. Provided we do not abuse his trust and only introduce him to other subject specialists such a system proves beneficial to all concerned.

Such constant publicity through talks, radio and newspapers contributes to a public awareness of the existence of the local collection and it becomes part of the pride of the community as it was 100 years ago before management diverted its interest elsewhere. The albatross is revealed as something to be nurtured, not destroyed through neglect.

It also leads to the charge of self-publicity in a service which is traditionally self-effacing. There is the need for a local collection to have a personal face since we are relying on the assistance of other people to enable the job to be done. It will be said that the local studies librarian *is* the local collection but he will know far better than anybody that the collection is far more important than any individual. Much may have been achieved but there is far more to do; many developments to be accomplished only through personal determination; many more to be accomplished only with somebody else's help.

Cross-Professional Co-operation

The local studies librarian is an isolated member of the library service but the material collected and the people assisted are also to be found in other depositories, some within the County Council administration.

Thus the equivalent service to the Cambridgeshire Collection in the Huntingdon area is to be found not in the library but at the Norris Museum; the local collection at Wisbech library is a shadow of that housed in the Wisbech and Fenland Museum and the Peterborough museum holds pamphlets not found elsewhere. Within Cambridge the County Folk Museum has an illustrations collection containing much not found in our stock whilst some of our original watercolours are on loan to them and contribute to their permanent display. The material mentioned constitutes only a small proportion of their overall stock and they cannot devote the same proportion of their resources to its organisation as the local collection does. On the other hand, they have more expertise in display and physical conservation and can call on the advice of the Area Museums Service for their specialist problems.

Within our county there are two groups which represent their needs. One is the Curators' Panel at which representatives from each museum, private and rate-supported, and the University, come together to discuss common problems and consider the expenditure of the sum put aside by the County Council to be awarded by the County Museums' Advisory Committee. This comprises elected representatives from various local authorities and nominees from the Curators' Panel.

Through the initiative of the Advisory Committee chairman — with whom I serve on another committee — an invitation was received to sit-in at their meeting. Once there it was possible to approach the chairman of the Curators' Panel and seek permission to act as an observer at their next gathering. There amidst the individual curators present were several with whom co-operation on an informal basis was long-established and who supported an initiative to make my attendance more formal. Since the County Librarian serves the Panel — as he does the Advisory Council — he was able to approve such a link and thus establish a working relationship between local studies library and museum which can now be developed.

Such a relationship with the County Record Office has yet to be formalised. There is a background of hostility and mistrust to be overcome on both sides. This can be traced back to pre-reorganisation days when the County Archivist, seeing the deficiencies in the service offered to local researchers by the County Library, took the initiative to remedy them within his department. That the City Library had collected that same material since 1855 was unknown to him since that collection was just recovering from its moribund state and by the time a junior library assistant brought it to his attention the policy was established.

Local government reorganisation brought both services under the same council but within different departments and a subsequent suggestion that the archives service be included within the overall responsibility of the County Librarian — along with museums — was resisted. One can understand the reluctance of the professional archivist and his Association to lose their relative independence and come under the supervision of librarians in the same way that librarians have fought for independence from the county education committee. Had such an amalgamation of resources been implemented it might have provided the opportunity for a rethink of the library's policy for local studies and might have led to a move to combine the

two specialist aspects of the service (which would have been resisted by the local studies librarian!). However, the proposals were not implemented and the County Archivist continues to have whole-county responsibility whilst the position of local studies librarian remains a divisional role, an imbalance which in local government hierarchy precludes specialist-to-specialist discussions on an equal footing.

Post-reorganisation relationships were set back by the discovery that the County Photographic Unit had been instructed to copy for the archivist all photographic work submitted for processing by the local collection which, at the very least, constituted duplication of accessioning between the two departments. A further example of this is the photographic collection of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society whereby the photographs, negatives and catalogues are lodged in the local collection whilst their glass lantern slides are in the record office.

Illustrations are an example of one type of material which will be found in both places since they will form part of the record of a family or business, yet it seems illogical for us both to borrow, copy and return individual postcard views or both buy them at collectors' fairs; there seems little reason for both to collect current village magazines or variant editions of early guide books. Our attitudes to "ephemera" will differ — for example, we salvaged council correspondence files from the period 1914-18 which contained headed letters from Anglo-German organisations and billheads from local companies which the archivist had cleared for destruction.

Such difficulties are not confined to Cambridgeshire nor, indeed, this country, since one of the most heated debates at a conference of librarians, curators and archivists which I addressed in Sardinia revolved around the fact that archaeologists collect fragments of pottery, local studies librarians collect bus tickets yet archivists discard vast masses of paper which others consider of potential value. The formulation of a negotiated policy on collecting would be so complicated and time consuming that it would absorb a disproportionate amount of time in relation to the benefit achieved. Duplicated resources mean that users can find them in both centres and they have a better chance of survival.

Our own department does not seek to collect the archives which have been amassed and retained by organisations or individuals; when these are offered it is our policy to telephone the record office and allow the donor to speak directly to the archivist. However, if the donor does not wish to do so then we accept them rather than have them destroyed. One reason for people's reluctance to contact the county record office is that they prefer the friendly and welcoming attitude of the local studies staff to what they perceive to be the officious and superior manner of the archivist. Certainly one's own experience records memories of a record office where a small group of local studies staff were prevented from entering the search room on an official tour since "scholars were working there and must not be disturbed", whilst the distinct impression from another was that their role was to preserve items for future historians and that calendaring and listing accessions was more of a priority than assisting present-day users — an attitude which conflicts strongly with the librarian's basic principle that "books are for use".

Yet such an attitude may be a defence mechanism against demand which threatens to overwhelm the service offered — and we can easily frighten away the young and nervous person who dares to seek his heritage. It is tempting to use "preservation of material" as an excuse not to guide readers to handbills when it may be the difficulty of locating and then refiling which is the true reason. Yet local studies librarians

have to fight against such tendencies and suppress their envy at the staffing levels and salary grades of their archivist colleagues, their luxuries of lunch-hour and Saturday closing and the small numbers of people they serve.

One needs both record office and local studies library working independently of each other yet in co-operation, sharing the resources of the conservationist and the bibliographer and respecting the professionalism of the other.

Library schools sometimes teach archive administration to give trainee librarians an insight into the role of the archivist but seem less aware of the practical librarianship of local studies. If the library profession ignores it then why should one expect the trainee archivist to be burdened with such knowledge or have any concept of local studies libraries and their service to the thousands of people who will never enter the archivist's office?

Teachers and academics give prominence to the manuscript record which allows them to introduce elements of palaeography and techniques of study which are more easily taught than the potential and limitations of the whole range of printed materials. This too is understandable since librarians have often ignored this material in their local collections.

With such basic lack of appreciation by educationalists, archivists and senior librarians and the problems already faced by an administration experiencing monumental difficulties with increased demand on every level of service at a time when staff and money is severely limited, it is not surprising that many librarians have seen the benefits of transferring responsibility for the troublesome albatross of a local collection to the person willing to accept the worry — the County Archivist — who really has little concept of its potential since it is outside his personal experience and will not have featured in his training.

Should this be another battle for the local studies librarian — can it truly be the library management, the library profession, the educationalists and archivists who are wrong and only the local studies librarian who is right?

History will be the judge but by the time that judgement is made the library local studies department may have gone the way of many other fabulous creatures and be merely a wondrous memory recorded in the acknowledgement pages of hundreds of projects and books whose authors have appreciated this hangover of Victorian idealism that just incidentally happens to be one of the oldest tasks that public libraries have ever performed and the most-used source of local information.

Fortunately, at least one Chief Librarian has produced a definition of a local studies department which echoes the ideals of a century ago and with his statement and the hope that colleagues elsewhere will echo it I cease this time-consuming distraction and return my energies to one of the most demanding and rewarding tasks our profession has to offer.

It is "a heritage which is both growing and developing and which we hold in trust for both posterity and as a debt of honour to those who collected the resources. It is a trust we are determined to continue"[25].

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